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ACROSS COVETED LANDS

VOL. I





HIS MAJESTY THE SHAH OF PERSIA.

ACROSS COVETED LANDS

OR

A JOURNEY FROM FLUSHING (HOLLAND)
TO CALCUTTA, OVERLAND

BY

A. HENRY SAVAGE LANDOR

*WITH 175 ILLUSTRATIONS, DIAGRAMS, PLANS AND MAPS
BY AUTHOR*

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

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MAP AT THE END OF VOLUME.

ACROSS COVETED LANDS

CHAPTER I

The start—The terrors of the Russian Custom-house—An amusing incident at the Russian frontier—Politeness of Russian officials—Warsaw : its sights ; its lovely women—The talented Pole—People who know how to travel by train—A ludicrous scene.

“FIRST single to Baku,” I requested when my turn came at the window of the ticket office at Victoria Station.

“Baku ?—where is that ?” queried the ticket man.

“In Southern Russia.”

“Oh, I see ! Well, we cannot book further than Warsaw for Russia.”

“Warsaw will do. . . . How much ? . . . Thank you.”

My baggage having next been duly registered direct for the capital of Poland, off I set to Queenborough, crossed over by the night boat to Flushing, and continued the following morning by express to Berlin.

Once in the Russian train from the German

capital one hears a great deal of the terrors of the approaching Russian Custom-house, and here I may relate rather an amusing incident which will prove what these terrors amount to. In my sleeping car there happened to be some French merchants on their way to the fair of Nijni-Novgorod. On perceiving my two rifles, a good-sized ammunition case, and two cameras, one of the gentlemen gratuitously informed me that if I intended to proceed to Russia I had better leave all these things behind, or they would all be confiscated at the frontier. I begged to differ, and the Frenchmen laughed boisterously at my ignorance, and at what would happen presently. In their imaginative minds they perceived my valued firearms being lost for ever, and predicted my being detained at the police station till it pleased *les terribles Cossacques* to let me proceed.

“Evidently,” shouted one of the Frenchmen at the top of his voice, “this is your first journey abroad. . . . *We*,” he added, “are great travellers. We have been once before in Russia.”

“You *are* great travellers !” I exclaimed, with the emphasis very strong on the *are*, and pretending intense admiration.

Naturally the Franco-Russian Alliance was dragged into the conversation ; were I a Frenchman I might fare less badly. The Russians and the French were brothers. But a British subject ! A hated Englishman bringing into Russia two rifles, two revolvers, six hundred cartridges, twelve hundred photographic plates, two cameras, a large case of scientific instruments, all

of which I would duly declare ! Why ? Russia was not England. I should soon experience how Englishmen were treated in some countries. " Russians," he exclaimed, " have not a polished manner like the French. *Ah, non !* They are semi-barbarians yet. They respect and fear the French, but not the English. . . . *par exemple !* "

The frontier station of Alexandrovo was reached, and a horde of terror-stricken passengers alighted from the carriages, preceded and followed by bags, portmanteaux, hold-alls, and bundles of umbrellas, which were hastily conveyed to the long tables of the huge Custom-house inspection room.

The two Frenchmen had their belongings next to mine on the long counter, and presently an officer came. They were French subjects and they had nothing to declare. Their elaborately decorated bags were instantly ordered open and turned upside down, while the officer searched with some gusto among the contents now spread on the table. There was a small pocket camera, two packets of photographic plates, some soiled handkerchiefs, collars and cuffs, a box of fancy note-paper, a bottle of scent, a pair of embroidered pantoufles, and a lot of patent brass studs and cuff links.

With the exception of the soiled linen, everything was seized, for all were liable to duty, and some sharp words of reprimand were used by the officer to my now subdued French neighbours for attempting to smuggle.

The officer moved on to me.

“Monsieur,” mournfully remarked the Frenchman, “now *you* will be done for.”

I declared everything and produced a special permit, which had been very courteously given me by the Russian Ambassador, and handed it to the officer. Having eagerly read it, he stood with his heels together and gave me a military salute. With a profound bow he begged me to point out to him all my luggage so that he could have it stamped without giving me further trouble. He politely declined to use the keys I handed him, and thinking that I might feel uncomfortable in the hustling crowd of people he conveyed me to a chair in order that I might sit down.

I turned round to look at the Frenchmen. They had altogether collapsed.

“I thought you said that Englishmen were hated in Russia, and that they would confiscate all my things? You see they have confiscated nothing,” I meekly remarked to the Frenchmen, when they returned to the sleeping car. “I do not think that I have met with more polite Customs officials anywhere.”

“*Oui, oui,*” muttered the stouter Frenchman, who was evidently in no mood to enter into further conversation. “*Et nous autres bêtes,*” he soliloquized, “*qui avons fait l’alliance avec ces sauvages là! On m’a tout pris même le papier à lettres!*”

He removed his coat and waistcoat and the many interesting patent appliances for holding his tie in the correct position—where it never remained—then he threw himself violently on

the berth, face towards the wall, and grumbled the greater part of the night on the stupid mistake of the Franco-Russian Alliance. On his return to France he would write a letter to the *Ministre des Affaires Étrangères*. After a long and tedious soliloquy he fortunately fell asleep.

Warsaw on the Vistula, the old capital of Poland, was reached in the morning.

The quickest way to Baku would have been to proceed to Moscow and then by the so-called "petroleum express," which leaves once a week, every Tuesday, for Baku. Unluckily, I could not reach Moscow in time, and therefore decided to travel across Russia by the next best route, *via* Kiev, Rostoff, and the Caspian. The few hours I remained in Warsaw were pleasantly spent in going about seeing the usual sights; the Palace and lovely Lazienki gardens, laid out in the old bed of the Vistula; the out-of-door theatre on a small island, the auditorium being separated by water from the stage; the lakes, the Saski Ogrod, and the Krasinski public gardens; the Jewish quarter of the town; the museums of ancient and modern art.

There are few cities in Europe that are prettier, cleaner, and more animated than Warsaw, and few women in the world that have a better claim to good looks than the Warsaw fair sex. The majority of women one sees in the streets are handsome, and carry themselves well, and their dress is in good taste, never over-done as it is in Paris, for instance.

The whole city has a flourishing appearance,

with its tramways, gay omnibuses, electric light, telephones, and every modern convenience. The streets are broad and cheerful. In the newer parts of the city there are beautiful residences, several of which, I was told, belong to British subjects settled there. The Russian military element is very strong, for Poland's love for Russia is not yet very great. As we walk along the main thoroughfares a long string of Cossacks, in their long black felt cloaks and Astrakan caps, canter along. They are a remarkably picturesque and business-like lot of soldiers.

Poles are civility itself, that is, of course, if one is civil to them.

Historically the place is of extreme interest, and the battlefields of Novogeorgievsk, which played such an important part in the Polish insurrection of 1831, and of Grochowo, where the Poles were defeated, are well worth a visit. At Maciejowice, too, some fifty miles up the Vistula, Kosciuzko was made prisoner by the conquering Russians.

Warsaw is the third largest city in the Russian Empire, and its favourable geographical position makes it one of the great pivots of Eastern Europe. With a navigable river and the great main railway lines to important centres such as Berlin, Vienna, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Dantzic, Kiev, and Odessa, with good climatic conditions, and fertile soil ; with the pick of natural talent in art and science, and the love for enterprise that is innate in the Polish character, Warsaw cannot help being a prosperous place.

The city has very extensive suburbs. The best known to foreigners, Praga, on the opposite bank of the Vistula, is connected with Warsaw by two iron bridges. Warsaw itself is built on terraces, one above another, along the bank of the river, but the main portion of the city stands on a high undulating plain above. There are over a hundred Catholic, several Greek churches, and a number of synagogues ; a university, schools of art, academies, fourteen monasteries, and two nunneries.

There are few places in the world where the artisan or the common workman is more intelligent and artistic, and where the upper classes are more refined and soundly cultured, than in Warsaw. With a certain reflex of the neighbouring German commercial influence, the place has become a thriving manufacturing and trading centre. Machinery, excellent pianos and other musical instruments, carriages, silver and electroplate, boots and leather goods are manufactured and exported on a large scale. The tanneries of Warsaw are renowned the world over, and the Warsaw boots are much sought after all over the Russian Empire for their softness, lightness and durability. Then there are great exports of wheat, flax, sugar, beer, spirits, and tobacco.

But time is short, and we must drive to the station. Say what you will about the Russian, there is a thing that he certainly knows how to do. He knows how to travel by rail. One has a great many preconceived ideas of the Russian and his ways. One is always reminded that he

is a barbarian, that he is ignorant, that he is dirty. He is possibly a barbarian in one way, that he can differentiate good from bad, real comfort from "optical illusions" or illusions of any other kind, a thing highly civilised people seem generally unable to do. This is particularly noticeable in Russian railway travelling,—probably the best and cheapest in the world.

To begin with, when you take a first-class ticket it entitles you to a seat numbered and reserved that nobody can appropriate. No more tickets are sold than correspond with the accommodation provided in the train. This does away entirely with the "leaving one's umbrella" business, to secure a seat, or scattering one's belongings all over the carriage to ensure the whole compartment to one's self, to the inconvenience of other travellers. Then first, second and third-class passengers are provided with sleeping accommodation. The sleeping accommodation, especially for first and second-class passengers, consists of a wide and long berth wherein they can turn round at their will, if they please, not of a short, narrow bunk in which even a lean person has to lie edgewise or roll out, as in the continental sleeping car, for which discomfort (rather than accommodation) preposterous extra charges have to be paid, above the first-class fare. Then, too, in the latter the compartments are so small, so ridiculously ventilated, that after one night spent boxed in, especially if another passenger shares the same cabin, one feels sick for some

hours, and in the day-time one has no room to turn round, nor space to put one's legs. As for the lighting, the less said the better. These faults exist in our own and the continental first-class compartments.

But the barbarian Russian knows and does better. The line being of a very broad gauge, his first-class carriages are extremely spacious and very high, with large windows and efficacious ventilators ; and there is plenty of room everywhere to spread one's limbs in every direction. There is probably less gilding about the ceiling, fewer nickel-plated catches about the doors ; not so much polished wood, nor ghastly coloured imitation-leather paper, nor looking-glasses, but very convenient folding-tables are found instead ; the seats are ample and serviceable, of plain, handsome red velvet, devoid of the innumerable dust-collecting button-pits—that striking feature of British and continental railway-carriage decoration. Movable cushions are provided for one's back and head. There are bright electric lights burning overhead, and adjustable reading lights in the corners of the carriage. A corridor runs along the whole train, and for a few kopeks passengers can at any moment procure excellent tea, caviare sandwiches, or other light refreshments from attendants.

Now for the bedding itself. The Russian, who is ever a practical man, carries his own bedding—a couple of sheets, blankets, and small pillow,—a custom infinitely cleaner and more sensible than sleeping in dubious, smelly blankets

of which one does not know who has used them before, nor when they were washed last. But if passengers wish, by paying a rouble (two shillings) a night to the guard, bedding is provided by the Railway. There is a fine *lavabo* at the end of each carriage, with shampoo, hot and cold water, etc. Here, too, by asking the guard, towels are handed over to those passengers who have not brought their own.

Here I may relate another amusing incident. Unable to get at my towels packed in my registered baggage, and ignorant of the Russian language, I inquired of a polyglot fellow-passenger what was the Russian word for towel, so that I could ask the guard for one.

“*Palatiensi*,” said he, and I repeated, “*Palatiensi, palatiensi, palatiensi*,” so as to impress the word well upon my memory. Having enjoyed a good wash and a shampoo, and dripping all over with water, I rang for the guard, and sure enough, when the man came, I could not recollect the word. At last it dawned upon me that it was,—“*Palatinski*,” and “*Palatinski*,” I asked of the guard.

To my surprise the guard smiled graciously, and putting on a modest air replied : “*Palatinski niet, paruski* (I do not speak Latin, I speak only Russian),” and the more I repeated “*palatinski*,” putting the inflection now on one syllable, then on the other, to make him understand, the more flattered the man seemed to be, and modestly gave the same answer.

This was incomprehensible to me, until my

polyglot fellow-passenger came to my assistance.

"Do you know what you are asking the guard?" he said in convulsions of laughter.

"Yes, I am asking for a 'palatinski'—a towel."

"No, you are not!" and he positively went into hysterics. "Palatinski means 'Do you speak Latin?' How can you expect a Russian railway-guard to speak Latin? Look how incensed the poor man is at being mistaken for a Latin scholar! Ask him for a *palatiensi*, and he will run for a towel."

The man did run on the magic word being pronounced, and duly returned with a nice clean *palatiensi*, which, however, was little use to me for I had by this time nearly got dry by the natural processes of dripping and evaporation.

One or two other similar incidents, and the extreme civility one meets from every one while travelling in Russia, passed the time away pleasantly until Kiev, one of the oldest cities of Russia, was reached.

Some business on a small scale, however, is transacted at the various fairs held in Kiev, such as the great fair at the beginning of the Russian year. There are many beet-root sugar refineries, the staple industry of the country, and next come leather tanneries, worked leather, machinery, spirits, grain and tobacco. Wax candles are manufactured in huge quantities, and in the monastery there is a very ancient printing-press for religious books.

Peter the Great erected a fortress here in a most commanding spot. It is said to contain up-to-date guns. A special pass has to be obtained from the military authorities to be allowed to enter it, not so much because it is used as an arsenal, but because from the high tower a most excellent panoramic view is obtained of the city, the neighbourhood, and the course of the river down below.

But Kiev is famous above all for its monastery, the Kievo-Petcherskaya, near which the two catacombs of St. Theodosius and St. Antony attract over three hundred thousand pilgrims every year. The first catacomb contains forty-five bodies of saints, the other eighty and the revered remains are stored in plain wood or silver-mounted coffins, duly labelled with adequate inscriptions. The huge monastery itself bears the appearance of great wealth, and has special accommodation for pilgrims. As many as 200,000 pilgrims are said to receive board and lodging yearly in the monastery. These are naturally pilgrims of the lower classes.

Enormous riches in solid gold, silver and jewellery are stored in the monastery and are daily increased by devout gifts.

But let us visit the catacombs.

The spare-looking, long-haired and bearded priests at the entrance of the catacomb present to each pilgrim, as a memento, a useful and much valued wax candle, which one lights and carries in one's hand down the steep and slippery steps of the subterranean passages. All along, the procession halts before mummified and most unattractive bodies, a buzzing of prayers being raised by the pilgrims when the identity of each saint is explained by the priest conducting the party. The more devout people stoop over the bodies and kiss them fervently all over, voluntarily and gladly disbursing in return for the privilege all such small cash as may lie idle in their pockets.

Down and down the crowd goes through the long winding, cold, damp, rancid-smelling passages, devoid of the remotest gleam of ventilation, and where one breathes air so thick and foul that it sticks to one's clothes and furs one's tongue, throat and lungs for several hours after one has emerged from the catacombs into fresh air again. Yet there are hermit monks who spend their lives underground without ever coming up to the light, and in doing so become bony, discoloured, ghastly creatures, with staring, inspired eyes and hollow cheeks, half demented to all appearance, but much revered and respected by the crowds for their self-sacrifice.

Further on the pilgrims drink holy water out of a small cup made in the shape of a cross, with which the liquid is served out from a larger vessel. The expression of beatitude on their faces as they sip of the holy water, and their amazing reverence for all they see and are told to do, are quite extraordinary to watch, and are quite refreshing in these dying days of idealism supplanted by fast-growing and less poetic atheistic notions. The scowl I received from the priest when my turn came and he lifted the tin cross to my lips, is still well impressed upon my mind. I drew back and politely declined to drink. There was a murmur of strong disapproval from all the people present, and the priest grumbled something; but really, what with the fetid smell of tallow-candle smoke, the used-up air, and the high scent of pilgrims—and religious people ever have a pungent odour peculiar to themselves—water, whether holy or otherwise, was about the very beverage that would have finished me up at that particular moment.

Glad I was to be out in the open air again, driving through the pretty gardens of Kiev, and to enjoy the extensive view from the high cliffs overlooking the winding Dnieper River. A handsome suspension bridge joins the two banks. The river is navigable and during the spring floods the water has been known to rise as much as twenty feet.

The city of Kiev is situated on high undulating ground some 350 feet above the river, and

up to 1837 consisted of the old town, Podol and Petchersk, to which forty-two years later were added Shulyavka, Solomenka, Kurenevka and Lukyanovka, the city being divided into eight districts. The more modern part of the town is very handsome, with wide streets and fine stone houses of good architecture, whereas the poorer abodes are mostly constructed of wood.

As in all the other cities of Russia there are in Kiev a great many churches, over seventy in all, the oldest of which is the Cathedral of St. Sophia in the centre of the town, built as early as 1037 on the spot where the Petchenegs were defeated the previous year by Yarosloff. It is renowned for its superb altar, its valuable mosaics and the tombs of Russian grand-dukes. Next in importance is the Church of the Assumption, containing the bodies of seven saints conveyed here from Constantinople. At night the cross borne by the statue of Vladimir, erected on a high point overlooking the Dnieper, is lighted up by electricity. This luminous cross can be seen for miles and miles all over the country, and the effect is most impressive and weird.

From Kiev I had to strike across country, and the trains were naturally not quite so luxurious as the express trains on the main line, but still the carriages were of the same type, extremely comfortable and spacious, and all the trains corridor trains.

The next important city where I halted for

a few hours was Kharkoff in the Ukraine, an agricultural centre where beet-root was raised in huge quantities and sugar manufactured from it ; wheat was plentiful, and good cattle, sheep and horses were bred. The population was mostly of Cossacks of the Don and Little Russians. The industries of the place were closely akin to farming. Agricultural implements were manufactured ; there were wool-cleaning yards, soap and candle factories, wheat-mills, brandy distilleries, leather tanneries, cloth manufactories, and brick kilns.

The horse fairs at Kharkoff are patronised by buyers from all parts of Russia, but to outsiders the city is probably better known as the early cradle of Nihilistic notions. Although quite a handsome city, with fine streets and remarkably good shops, Kharkoff has nothing special to attract the casual visitor, and in ordinary times a few hours are more than sufficient to get a fair idea of the place.

With a railway ticket punched so often that there is very little left of it, we proceed to Rostoff, where we shall strike the main line from Moscow to the Caucasus. Here is a comparatively new city—not unlike the shambling lesser Western cities of the United States of America, with plenty of tumbling-down, made-anyhow fences, and empty tin cans lying everywhere. The streets are unpaved, and the consequent dust blinding, the drinking saloons in undue proportion to the number of houses, and vodka-drunken people in undue

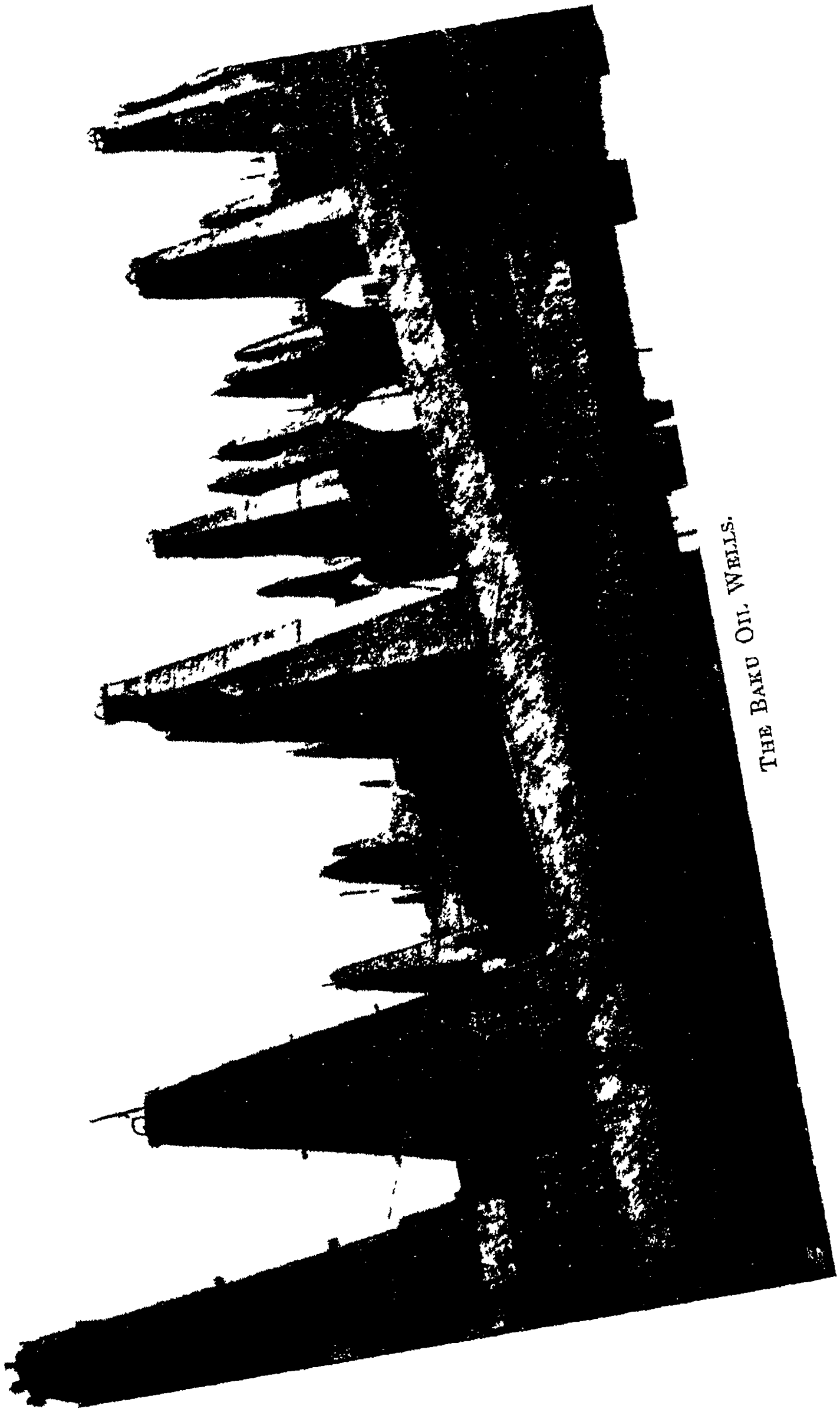
proportion to the population. Votka-drunkenness differs from the intoxication of other liquors in one particular. Instead of "dead drunk" it leaves the individuals drunk-dead. You see a disgusting number of these corpse-like folks lying about the streets, cadaverous-looking and motionless, spread flat on their faces or backs, uncared-for by everybody. Some sleep it off, and, if not run over by a droshki, eventually go home; some sleep it on, and are eventually conveyed to the graveyard, and nobody seems any the wiser except, of course, the people who do not drink bad votka to excess.

Rostoff stands at the head of the Delta of the Don, a position of great strategical importance, where of course the Russians have not failed to build strong fortifications. These were begun as early as 1761. Now very active ship-building yards are found here, and extensive caviare factories. Leather, wool, corn, soap, ropes and tobacco are also exported, and the place, apart from its military importance, is steadily growing commercially. The majority of shops seem to deal chiefly in American and German made agricultural implements, machinery and tools, and in firearms and knives of all sizes and shapes. The place is not particularly clean and certainly hot, dusty and most unattractive. One is glad to get into the train again and steam away from it.

As we get further South towards the Caucasus the country grows more barren and hot, the dust is appalling, but the types of inhabitants at the

little stations become very picturesque. The Georgians are very fine people and the Armenians too, in appearance at least. The station sheds along the dusty steppes are guarded by soldiers, presumably to prevent attacks on the trains, and as one gets near the Caspian one begins to see the wooden pyramids over oil wells, and long freight trains of petroleum carried in iron cylindrical tanks. The wells get more numerous as we go along ; the stations more crowded with petroleum tanks. We are nearing the great naphtha wells of Baku, where at last we arrive, having travelled from Tuesday to Sunday afternoon, or five days, except a few hours' halt in Kiev, Kharkoff and Rostoff.

The first-class railway fare from Warsaw for the whole journey was fully covered by a five-pound note, and, mind you, could have been done cheaper if one chose to travel by slower trains on a less direct route !



THE BAKU OIL WELLS.

CHAPTER III

Baku—Unnecessary anxiety—A storm—Oil wells—Naphtha spouts—How the wells are worked—The native city—The Baku Bay—Fortifications—The Maiden's Tower—Depressing vegetation—Baku dust—Prosperity and hospitality—The Amir of Bokhara—The mail service to Persia on the Caspian—The Mercury and Caucasus line—Lenkoran—Astara (Russo-Persian boundary)—Antiquated steamers.

So many accounts are heard of how one's registered baggage in Russia generally arrives with locks smashed and minus one's most valuable property, and how unpunctual in arriving luggage is, and how few passengers escape without having their pockets picked before reaching their destination—by the way, a fellow-passenger had his pockets picked at the station of Mineralnya Vod—that I was somewhat anxious to see my belongings again, and fully expected to find that something had gone wrong with them. Much to my surprise, on producing the receipt at the very handsome railway terminus, all my portmanteaux and cases were instantly delivered in excellent condition.

The Caspian Sea steamers for Persia leave Baku on Sunday and Tuesday at midnight.

There was a fierce sand storm raging at the time and the steamer had returned without being able to land her passengers at their destination. I decided to wait till the Tuesday. There is plenty to interest one in Baku. I will not describe the eternal fires, described so often by other visitors, nor tell how naphtha was tapped for the first time at this place, and how in 1886 one particular well spouted oil with such tremendous force that it was impossible to check it and it deluged a good portion of the neighbourhood. A year later, in 1887, another fountain rose to a height of 350 ft. There are myriads of other lesser fountains and wells, each covered by a wooden shed like a slender pyramid, and it is a common occurrence to see a big spout of naphtha rising outside and high above the top of the wooden shed, now from one well, now from another.

The process of bringing naphtha to the surface under ordinary circumstances is simple and effective, a metal cylinder is employed that has a valve at the lower end allowing the tube to fill while it descends, and closing automatically when the tube is full and is being raised above ground and emptied into pits provided for the purpose. The naphtha then undergoes the process of refinement. There are at the present moment hundreds of refineries in Baku. The residue and waste of naphtha are used as fuel, being very much cheaper than coal or wood.

The greater number of wells are found a few miles out of the town on the Balakhani Peninsula, and the naphtha is carried into the Baku

refineries by numerous pipe lines. The whole country round is, however, impregnated with oil, and even the sea in one or two bays near Baku is coated with inflammable stuff and can be ignited by throwing a lighted match upon it. At night this has a weird effect.

Apart from the oil, Baku—especially the European settlement—has nothing to fascinate the traveller. In the native city, Persian in type, with flat roofs one above the other and the hill top crowned by a castle and the Mosque of Shah Abbas, constant murders occur. The native population consists mostly of Armenians and Persians. Cotton, saffron, opium, silk and salt are exported in comparatively small quantities. Machinery, grain and dried fruit constitute the chief imports.

The crescent-shaped Baku Bay, protected as it is by a small island in front of it, affords a safe anchorage for shipping. It has good ship-yards and is the principal station of the Russian fleet in the Caspian. Since Baku became part of the Russian Empire in 1806 the harbour has been very strongly fortified.

The most striking architectural sight in Baku is the round Maiden's Tower by the water edge, from the top of which the lovely daughter of the Khan of Baku precipitated herself on to the rocks below because she could not marry the man she loved.

The most depressing sight in Baku is the vegetation, or rather the strenuous efforts of the lover of plants to procure verdure at all costs in

the gardens. It is seldom one's lot to see trees and plants look more pitiable, notwithstanding the unbounded care that is taken of them. The terrific heat of Baku, the hot winds and sandstorms are deadly enemies to vegetation. Nothing will grow. One does not see a blade of grass nor a shrub anywhere except those few that are artificially brought up. The sand is most trying. It is so fine that the wind forces it through anything, and one's tables, one's chairs, one's bed are yellow-coated with it. The tablecloth at the hotel, specklessly white when you begin to dine, gets gradually yellower at sight, and by the time you are half through your dinner the waiter has to come with a brush to remove the thick coating of dust on the table.

These are the drawbacks, but there is an air of prosperity about the place and people that is distinctly pleasing, even although one may not share in it. There is quite a fair foreign community of business people, and their activity is very praiseworthy. The people are very hospitable—too hospitable. When they do not talk of naphtha, they drink sweet champagne in unlimited quantities. But what else could they do? Everything is naphtha here, everything smells of naphtha, the steamers, the railway engines are run with naphtha. The streets are greasy with naphtha. Occasionally—frequently of late—the monotony of the place is broken by fires of gigantic proportions on the premises of over-insured well-owners. The destruction

to property on such occasions is immense, the fires spreading with incalculable rapidity over an enormous area, and the difficulty of extinguishing them being considerable.

When I was in Baku the Amir of Bokhara was being entertained in the city as guest of the Government. His suite was quartered in the Grand Hotel. He had taken his usual tour through Russia and no trouble had been spared to impress the Amir with the greatness of the Russian Empire. He had been given a very good time, and I was much impressed with the pomp and cordiality with which he was treated. Neither the Governor nor any of the other officials showed him the usual stand-off manner which in India, for instance, would have been used towards an Asiatic potentate, whether conquered by us or otherwise. They dealt with him as if he had been a European prince—at which the Amir seemed much flattered. He had a striking, good-natured face with black beard and moustache, and dark tired eyes that clearly testified to Russian hospitality.

I went to see him off on the steamer which he kept waiting several hours after the advertised time of departure. He dolefully strode on board over a grand display of oriental rugs, while the military brass band provided for the occasion played Russian selections. Everybody official wore decorations, even the captain of the merchant ship, who proudly bore upon his chest a brilliant star—a Bokhara distinction received

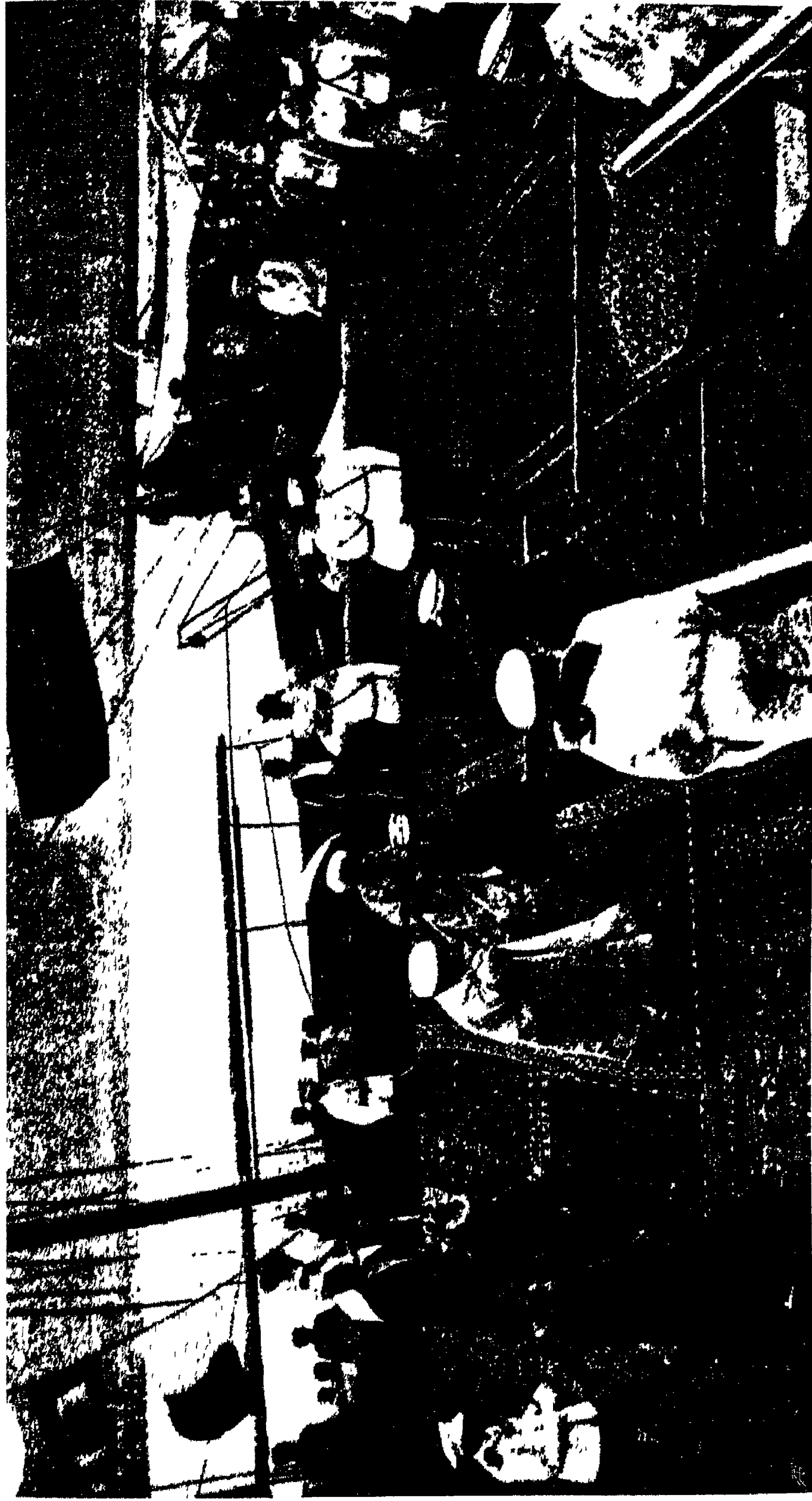
from the Amir on his outward journey for navigating him safely across the Caspian.

The Amir's suite was very picturesque, some of the men wearing long crimson velvet gowns embroidered in gold, others silk-checked garments. All had white turbans. The snapshot reproduced in the illustration shows the Amir accompanied by the Governor of Baku just stepping on board.

There is a regular mail service twice a week in summer, from April to the end of October, and once a week in winter, on the Caspian between Baku and Enzeli in Persia, the Russian Government paying a subsidy to the Kavkas and Mercury Steam Navigation Company for the purpose of conveying passengers, mails (and, in the event of war, troops) into Persia and back. There are also a number of coasting steamers constantly plying between the various ports on the Caspian both on the Russian and Persian coast.

The hurricane having abated there was a prospect of a fair voyage and the probability of landing at Enzeli in Persia, so when the Tuesday came I went on board the old rickety paddle-steamer (no less than forty-five years old) which was to convey me to that port. She was one of the Mercury-Caucasus Co. fleet, and very dirty she was, too.

It is perhaps right to mention that for the first time in Russia, purposeless rudeness and insolence came to my notice on the part of the ticket officials of the Mercury line. They be-



THE AMIR OF BOKHARA LEAVING BAKU TO RETURN TO HIS COUNTRY

haved like stupid children, and were absolutely incompetent to do the work which had been entrusted to them. They were somewhat surprised when I took them to task and made them "sit up." Having found that they had played the fool with the wrong man they instantly became very meek and obliging. It is nevertheless a great pity that the Mercury Company should employ men of this kind who, for some aim of their own, annoy passengers, both foreign and Russian, and are a disgrace to the Company and their country.

On board ship the captain, officers and stewards were extremely civil. Nearly all the captains of the Caspian steamers were Norwegian or from Finland, and were jolly fellows. The cabins were very much inhabited, so much so that it was difficult to sleep in them at all. Insects so voracious and in such quantities and variety were in full possession of the berths, that they gave one as lively a night as it is possible for mortals to have. Fortunately the journey was not a long one, and having duly departed at midnight from Baku I reached Lenkoran the next day, with its picturesque background of mountains and thickly-wooded country. This spot is renowned for tiger-shooting.

Our next halt was at Astara, where there were a number of wooden sheds and drinking saloons,—a dreadful place, important only because on the Perso-Russian boundary line formed by the river of the same name. We landed here a number of police officers, who were met by a

deputation of some fifty Persian-looking men, who threw their arms round their necks and in turn lustily kissed them on both cheeks. It was a funny sight. When we got on board again after a couple of hours on shore the wind rose and we tossed about considerably. Another sleepless night on the "living" mattress in the bunk, and early in the morning we reached the Persian port of Enzeli.

CHAPTER IV

The Port of Enzeli—Troublesome landing—Flat-bottomed boats—A special permit—Civility of officials—Across the Murd-ap lagoon—Piri-Bazaar—A self-imposed golden rule—Where our stock came from—The drive to Resht—The bazaar—The native shops and foreign goods—Ghilan's trade—The increase in trade—British and Russian competitions—Sugar—Tobacco—Hotels—The British Consulate—The Governor's palace—H.E. Salare Afkham—A Swiss hotel—Banks.

ONE calls Enzeli a “port” *pour façon de parler*, for Persia has no harbours at all on the Caspian sea. Enzeli, Meshed-i-Sher or Astrabad, the three principal landing places on the Persian coast, have no shelter for ships, which have to lie a good distance out at sea while passengers and cargo are transhipped by the Company's steam launch or—in rough weather—by rowing boats. In very rough weather it is impossible to effect a landing at all, and—this is a most frequent occurrence on the treacherous Caspian—after reaching one's journey's end one has to go all the way back to the starting point and begin afresh. There are people who have been compelled to take the journey four or five times before they could land, until the violent storms

which often rage along the Persian coast had completely subsided and allowed the flimsy steam-launch at Enzeli to come out to meet the steamers, lying about a mile outside.

We had passengers on board who had been unable to land on the previous journey, and were now on their second attempt to set foot in Persia. We were rolling a good deal when we cast anchor, and after waiting some hours we were informed that it was too rough for the steam-launch to come out. The captain feared that he must put to sea again, as the wind was rising and he was afraid to remain so near the coast. Two rowing boats eventually came out, and with some considerable exertion of the rowers succeeded in getting near the steamer. I immediately chartered one, and after a good deal of see-saw and banging and knocking and crackling of wood alongside the steamer, my baggage and I were transhipped into the flat-bottomed boat. Off we rowed towards the shore, getting drenched each time that the boat dipped her nose into the sea.

The narrow entrance of the Enzeli bay is blocked by a sand-bar. The water is here very shallow, only about six feet deep. Riding on the top of the breakers was quite an experience, and we occasionally shipped a good deal of water. We, however, landed safely and had to pay pretty dearly for the convenience. The boatmen do not run the risk of going out for nothing, and when they do, take every advantage of passengers who employ them. I was fortunate to get off by

giving a backshish of a few *tomans* (dollars), but there are people who have been known to pay three, four and even five pounds sterling to be conveyed on shore.

Here, too, thanks to the civility of the Persian Ambassador in London, I had a special permit for my firearms, instruments, etc., and met with the greatest courtesy from the Belgian and Persian officers in the Customs. It is necessary to have one's passport in order, duly *visé* by the Persian Consul in London, or else a delay might occur at Enzeli.

There is a lighthouse at Enzeli, the Customs buildings and a small hotel. From this point a lagoon, the Murd-ap has to be crossed, either by the small steam-launch or by rowing boat. As there seemed to be some uncertainty about the departure of the launch, and as I had a good deal of luggage, I preferred the latter way. Eight powerful men rowed with all their might at the prospect of a good backshish ; and we sped along at a good pace on the placid waters of the lagoon, in big stretches of open water, now skirting small islands, occasionally through narrow canals, the banks of which were covered with high reeds and heavy, tropical, confused, untidy vegetation. The air was still and stifling—absolutely unmoved, screened as it was on all sides by vegetation. The sailors sang a monotonous cadence, and the boat glided along for some three hours until we arrived at the mouth of the Piri river, hardly wide enough for a couple of boats to go through simultaneously,

and so shallow that rowing was no longer practicable.

The men jumped off, tied the towing rope that hung from the mast to their belts, and ran along the banks of the Piri river, the water of which was almost stagnant. An hour or so later we suddenly came upon a number of boats jammed together in the miniature harbour of Piri Bazaar—a pool of putrid water a few feet in circumference. As the boat gradually approached, a stone-paved path still separated from you by a thick wide layer of filthy mud wound its way to the few miserable sheds—the bazaar—up above. A few trays of grapes, some Persian bread, some earthenware pottery of the cheapest kind, are displayed in the shop fronts—and that is all of the Piri-Bazaar. On landing at Enzeli one hears so much of Piri-Bazaar that one gets to imagine it a big, important place,—and as it is, moreover, practically the first really typical Persian place at which one touches, the expectations are high. Upon arrival there one's heart sinks into one's boots, and one's boots sink deep into black stinking mud as one takes a very long—yet much too short—jump from the boat on to what one presumes to be *terra firma*.

With boots clogged and heavy with filth, a hundred people like ravenous birds of prey yelling in your ears (and picking your pockets if they have a chance), with your luggage being mercilessly dragged in the mud, with everybody demanding backshish on all sides,

tapping you on the shoulder or pulling your coat,—thus one lands in real Persia.

In the country of Iran one does not travel for pleasure nor is there any pleasure in travelling. For study and interest, yes. There is plenty of both everywhere.

Personally, I invariably make up my mind when I start for the East that no matter what happens I will on no account get out of temper, and this self-imposed rule—I must admit—was never, in all my travels, tried to the tantalising extent that it was in the country of the Shah. The Persian lower classes—particularly in places where they have come in contact with Europeans—are well-nigh intolerable. There is nothing that they will not do to annoy you in every possible way, to extort backshish from you. In only one way do Persians in this respect differ from other Orientals. The others usually try to obtain money by pleasing you and being useful and polite, whereas the Persian adopts the quicker, if not safer, method of bothering you and giving you trouble to such an unlimited degree that you are compelled to give something in order to get rid of him. And in a country where no redress can be obtained from the police, where laws do not count, and where the lower classes are as corrupt and unscrupulous as they are in the more civilised parts of Persia (these remarks do not apply to the parts where few or no Europeans have been) the only way to save one's self from constant worry

and repressed anger—so bad for one's health—is to make up one's mind at once to what extent one is prepared to be imposed upon, and leave the country after. That is to say, if one does not wish to adopt the only other and more attractive alternative of inflicting summary justice on two-thirds of the natives one meets,—too great an exertion, to be sure, in so hot a climate.

They say that Persia is the country that our stock came from. It is quite possible, and if so we are indeed to be congratulated upon having morally improved so much since, or the Persians to be condoled with on their sad degeneration. The better classes, however, are very different, as we shall see later.

Personally, I adopted the first method suggested above, the easier of the two, and I deliberately put by what I thought was a fair sum to be devoted exclusively to extortion. On leaving the country several months later, much to my astonishment I found that I had not been imposed upon half as much as I expected, although I had stayed in Persia double the time I had intended. Maybe this can be accounted for by my having spent most of my time in parts not so much frequented by Europeans. Indeed, if the Persian is to-day the perfidious individual he is, we have to a great extent only ourselves to blame for making him so.

Keeping my temper under control, and an eye on my belongings, I next hired a carriage to convey me to the town of Resht, seven

miles distant. In damp heat, that made one's clothes moist and unpleasant, upon a road muddy to such an extent that the wheels sank several inches in it and splashed the passenger all over, we galloped through thick vegetation and patches of agriculture, and entered the city of Resht. Through the narrow winding streets of the bazaar we slowed down somewhat in some places, the carriage almost touching the walls of the street on both sides. The better houses possess verandahs with banisters painted blue, while the walls of the buildings are generally white.

One is struck by the great number of shoe shops in the bazaar, displaying true Persian shoes with pointed turned-up toes,—then by the brass and copper vessel shops, the ancient and extremely graceful shapes of the vessels and amphoras being to this date faithfully preserved and reproduced. More pleasing still to the eye are the fruit shops, with huge trays of water-melons, cucumbers, figs, and heaps of grapes. The latter are, nevertheless, not so very tasty to the palate and do not compare with the delicate flavour of the Italian or Spanish grapes.

Somewhat incongruous and out-of-place, yet more numerous than truly Persian shops, are the semi-European stores, with cheap glass windows displaying inside highly dangerous-looking kerosene lamps, badly put together tin goods, soiled enamel tumblers and plates, silvered glass balls for ceiling decoration, and the vilest oleographs that the human mind can devise,

only matched by the vileness of the frames. Small looking-glasses play an important part in these displays, and occasionally a hand sewing-machine. Tinned provisions, wine and liquor shops are numerous, but unfortunate is the man who may have to depend upon them for his food. The goods are the remnants of the oldest stocks that have gradually drifted, unsold, down to Baku, and have eventually been shipped over for the Persian market where people do not know any better. Resht is the chief city in the Ghilan province.

Ghilan's trade in piece-goods is about two-thirds in the hands of Russia, while one-third (or even less) is still retained by England,—Manchester goods. This cannot well be helped, for there is no direct route from Great Britain to Resht, and all British goods must come through Bagdad, Tabriz, or Baku. The two first routes carry most of the trade, which consists principally of shirtings, prints, cambrics, mulls, nainsooks, and Turkey-reds, which are usually put down as of Turkish origin, whereas in reality they come from Manchester, and are merely re-exported, mainly from Constantinople, by native firms either in direct traffic or in exchange for goods received.

One has heard a great deal of the enormous increase in trade in Persia during the last couple of years or so. The increase has not been in the trade itself, but in the collection of Customs dues, which is now done in a regular and business like fashion by competent Belgian officials, instead of

by natives, to whom the various collecting stations were formerly farmed out.

It will not be very easy for the British trader to compete successfully with the Russian in northern Persia, for that country, being geographically in such close proximity, can transport her cheaply made goods at a very low cost into Iran. Also the Russian Government allows enormous advantages to her own traders with Persia in order to secure the Persian market, and to develop her fast-increasing industrial progress,—advantages which British traders do not enjoy. Still, considering all the difficulties British trade has to contend with in order to penetrate, particularly into Ghilan, it is extraordinary how some articles, like white Manchester shirtings, enjoy practically a monopoly, being of a better quality than similar goods sent by Russia, Austria, Hungary, Germany, Italy or Holland.

Loaf sugar, which came at one time almost entirely from France, has been cut out by Russian sugar, which is imported in large quantities and eventually finds its way all over Persia. It is of inferior quality, but very much cheaper than sugar of French manufacture, and is the chief Russian import into Ghilan.

Tobacco comes principally from Turkey and Russia. In going on with our drive through the bazaar we see it sold in the tiny tobacco shops, where it is tastily arranged in heaps on square pieces of blue paper, by the side of Russian and Turkish cigarettes.

And now for the Resht Hotels. Here is an Armenian hotel—European style. From the balcony signs and gesticulations and shouts in English, French, and Russian endeavour to attract the passer-by—a youth even rushes to the horses and stops them in order to induce the traveller to alight and put up at the hostelry ; but after a long discussion, on we go, and slowly wind our way through the intricate streets crowded with men and women and children—all grumbling and making some remark as one goes by. At one point a circle of people squatting in the middle of a road round a pile of water-melons, at huge slices of which they each bit lustily, kept us waiting some time, till they moved themselves and their melons out of the way for the carriage to pass. Further on a soldier or two in rags lay sleeping flat on the shady side of the road, with his pipe (kalian) and his sword lying by his side. Boys were riding wildly on donkeys and frightened women scrambled away or flattened themselves against the side walls of the street, while the hubs of the wheels shaved and greased their ample black silk or cotton trousers made in the shape of sacks, and the horses' hoofs splashed them all over with mud. The women's faces were covered with a white cloth reaching down to the waist. Here, too, as in China, the double basket arrangement on a long pole swung across the shoulders was much used for conveying loads of fruit and vegetables on men's shoulders ;—but least picturesque of all were the well-to-do people



PERSIAN WRESTLING.

of the strong sex, in short frock-coats pleated all over in the skirt.

One gets a glimpse of a picturesque blue-tiled pagoda-like roof with a cylindrical column upon it, and at last we emerge into a large quadrangular square, with European buildings to the west side.

A little further the British flag flies gaily in the wind above H.M.'s Consulate. Then we come upon a larger building, the Palace of the Governor, who, to save himself the trouble and expense of having sentries at the entrances, had life-size representations of soldiers with drawn swords painted on the wall. They are not all represented wearing the same uniform, as one would expect with a guard of that kind, but for variety's sake some have red coats, with plenty of gold braiding on them, and blue trousers, the others blue coats and red trousers. One could not honestly call the building a beautiful one, but in its unrestored condition it is quite picturesque and quaint. It possesses a spacious verandah painted bright blue, and two windows at each side with elaborate ornamentations similarly coloured red and blue. A red-bordered white flag with the national lion in the centre floats over the Palace, and an elaborate castellated archway, with a repetition of the Persian Lion on either side, stands in front of the main entrance in the square of the Palace. So also do four useful kerosene lamp-posts. The telegraph office is to the right of the Palace with a pretty garden in front of it.

The most important political personage living

in Resht is His Excellency Salare Afkham, called Mirza Fathollah Khan, one of the richest men in Persia, who has a yearly income of some twenty thousand pounds sterling. He owns a huge house and a great deal of land round Resht, and is much respected for his talent and kindly manner. He was formerly Minister of the Customs and Posts of all Persia, and his chest is a blaze of Russian, Turkish and Persian decorations of the highest class, bestowed upon him by the various Sovereigns in recognition of his good work. He has for private secretary Abal Kassem Khan, the son of the best known of modern Persian poets, Chams-echoéra, and himself a very able man who has travelled all over Asia, Turkestan and Europe.

Persia is a country of disappointments. There is a general belief that the Swiss are splendid hotel-keepers. Let me give you my experience of the hotel at Resht kept by a Swiss.

“Can this be the Swiss hotel?” I queried to myself, as the driver pulled up in front of an appallingly dirty flight of steps. There seemed to be no one about, and after going through the greater part of the building, I eventually came across a semi-starved Persian servant, who assured me that it was. The proprietor, when found, received me with an air of condescension that was entertaining. He led me to a room which he said was the best in the house. On inspection, the others, I agreed with him, were decidedly not better. The hotel had twelve bedrooms and they were all disgustingly filthy. True

enough, each bedroom had more beds in it than one really needed, two or even three in each bedroom, but a *coup-d'œil* was sufficient to assure one's self that it was out of the question to make use of any of them. I counted four different coloured hairs, of disproportionate lengths and texture, on one bed-pillow in my room, leaving little doubt that no less than four people had laid their heads on that pillow before ; and the pillow of the other bed was so black with dirt that I should imagine at least a dozen consecutive occupants of that couch would be a low estimate indeed. As for the sheets, blankets, and towels, we had better draw a veil. I therefore preferred to spread my own bedding on the floor, and slept there. The hotel boasted of three large dining-rooms in which a few moth-eaten stuffed birds and a case or two of mutilated butterflies, a couple of German oleographs, which set one's teeth on edge, and dusty, stamped cotton hangings formed the entire decoration.

To give one an appetite—which one never lost as long as one stayed there—one was informed before dinner that the proprietor was formerly the Shah's cook. After dinner one felt very, very sorry for the poor Shah, and more so for one's self, for having put up at the hotel. But there was no other place in Resht, and I stuck to my decision that I would never get angry, so I stood all patiently. The next day I would start for Teheran.

One talks of Persian extortion, but it is nothing to the example offered to the natives by Euro-

peans in Persia. The charges at the hotel were exorbitant. One paid as much per day as one would at the very first hotel in London, New York, or Paris, such as the Carlton, the Waldorf, or Ritz. Only here one got absolutely nothing for it except very likely an infectious disease, as I did. In walking bare-footed on the filthy matting, while taking my bath, some invisible germ bored its way into the sole of my right foot and caused me a good deal of trouble for several weeks after. Animal life in all its varieties was plentiful in all the rooms.

Previous to starting on the long drive to the capital I had to get some meat cooked for use on the road, but it was so putrid that even when I flung it to a famished pariah dog he refused to eat it. And all this, mind you, was inexcusable, because excellent meat, chickens, eggs, vegetables, and fruit, can be purchased in Resht for a mere song, the average price of a good chicken, for instance, being about 5*d.* to 10*d.*, a whole sheep costing some eight or ten shillings. I think it is only right that this man should be exposed, so as to put other travellers on their guard, not so much for his overcharges, for when travelling one does not mind over-paying if one is properly treated, but for his impudence in furnishing provisions that even a dog would not eat. Had it not been that I had other provisions with me I should have fared very badly on the long drive to Teheran.

It may interest future travellers to know that the building where the hotel was at the time of my visit, August, 1901, has now been taken over

for five years by the Russian Bank in order to open a branch of their business in Resht, and that the hotel itself, I believe, has now shifted to even less palatial quarters !

The Imperial Bank of Persia has for some years had a branch in Resht, and until 1901 was the only banking establishment in the town.

CHAPTER V

Resht—Impostors—A visit to the Head Mullah—Quaint notions—Arrangements for the drive to Teheran—The Russian concession of the Teheran road—The stormy Caspian and unsafe harbours—The great Menzil bridge—A detour in the road—Capital employed in the construction of the road—Mistaken English notions of Russia—Theory and practice—High tolls—Exorbitant fares—A speculator's offer refused—Development of the road.

RESHT is an odious place in every way. It is, as it were, the "Port Said" of Persia, for here the scum of Armenia, of Southern Russia, and of Turkestan, stagnates, unable to proceed on the long and expensive journey to Teheran. One cannot go out for a walk without being accosted by any number of impostors, often in European clothes, who cling like leeches and proceed to try to interest you in more or less plausible swindles. One meets a great many people, too, who are on the look out for a "lift" in one's carriage to the Persian capital.

I paid quite an interesting visit to a near relation of the Shah's, who was the guest of the local Head Mullah. The approach to the Mullah's palace was not attractive. I was conveyed through narrow passages, much out of

repair, until we arrived in front of a staircase at the foot of which lay in a row, and in pairs, shoes of all sizes, prices, and ages, patiently waiting for their respective owners inside the house. A great many people were outside in the courtyard, some squatting down and smoking a kalia, which was passed round after a puff or two from one person to the other, care being taken by the last smoker to wipe the mouthpiece with the palm of his hand before handing it to his neighbour. Others loitered about and conversed in a low tone of voice.

A Mullah received me at the bottom of the staircase and led me up stairs to a large European-looking room, with glass windows, cane chairs, and Austrian glass candelabras. There were a number of Mullahs in their long black robes, white or green sashes, and large turbans, sitting round the room in a semicircle, and in the centre sat the high Mullah with the young prince by his side. They all rose when I entered, and I was greeted in a dignified yet very friendly manner. A chair was given me next to the high Mullah, and the usual questions about one's family, the vicissitudes of one's journey, one's age, one's plans, the accounts of what one had seen in other countries, were duly gone through.

It was rather curious to notice the interest displayed by the high Mullah in our South African war. He seemed anxious to know whether it was over yet, or when it would be over. Also, how was it that a big nation like

Great Britain could not conquer a small nation like the Boers.

“It is easier for an elephant to kill another elephant,” I replied, “than for him to squash a mosquito.”

“Do you not think,” said the Mullah, “that England is now an old nation, tired and worn—too old to fight? Nations are like individuals. They can fight in youth—they must rest in old age. She has lived in glory and luxury too long. Glory and luxury make nations weak. Persia is an example.”

“Yes, there is much truth in your sayings. We are tired and worn. We have been and are still fast asleep in consequence. But maybe the day will come when we shall wake up much refreshed. We are old enough to learn, but not to die yet.”

He was sorry that England was in trouble.

Tea, or rather sugar with some drops of tea on it was passed, in tiny little glasses with miniature perforated tin spoons. Then another cross-examination.

“Do you drink spirits and wine?”

“No.”

“Do you smoke?”

“No.”

“You would make a good Mussulman.”

“Possibly, but not probably.”

“In your travels do you find the people generally good or bad?”

“Taking things all round, in their badness, I find the people usually pretty good.”

“How much does your King give you to go about seeing foreign countries?”

“The King gives me nothing. I go at my own expense.”

This statement seemed to take their breath away. It was bad enough for a man to be sent—for a consideration—by his own Government to a strange land, but to pay for the journey one's self, why! it seemed to them too preposterous for words. They had quite an excited discussion about it among themselves, the Persian idea being that every man must sponge upon the Government to the utmost extent.

The young Prince hoped that I would travel as his guest in his carriage to Teheran. Unfortunately, however, I had made other arrangements, and was unable to accept his invitation.

My visit ended with renewed salaams and good wishes on their part for my welfare on the long journey I was about to undertake. I noticed that, with the exception of the Prince, who shook my hand warmly, the Mullahs bowed over and over again, but did not touch my hand.

Now for the business visit at the post station. After a good deal of talk and an unlimited consumption of tea, it had been arranged that a landau with four post horses to be changed every six farsakhs, at each post station, and a *fourgon*—a large van without springs, also with four horses,—for luggage, should convey me to Teheran. So little luggage is allowed inside one's carriage that an additional *fourgon* is

nearly always required. One is told that large packages can be forwarded at a small cost by the postal service, and that they will reach Teheran soon after the passengers, but unhappy is the person that tries the rash experiment. There is nothing to guarantee him that he will ever see his luggage again. In Persia, a golden rule while travelling, that may involve some loss of time but will avoid endless trouble and worry in the end, is never to let one's luggage go out of sight. One is told that the new Teheran road is a Russian enterprise, and therefore quite reliable, and so it is, but not so the company of transportation, which is in the hands of natives, the firm of Messrs. Bagheroff Brothers, which is merely subsidized by the Russian Road Company.

As every one knows, in 1893 the Russians obtained a concession to construct a carriage-road from Piri-Bazaar *via* Resht to Kasvin, an extension to Hamadan, and the purchase of the road from Kasvin to Teheran, which was already in existence. Nominally the concession was not granted to the Russian Government itself—as is generally believed in England—but to a private company—the “Compagnie d'Assurance et de Transport en Perse,” which, nevertheless, is a mere off-shoot of Government enterprise and is backed by the Russian Government to no mean degree. The Company's headquarters are in Moscow, and in Persia the chief office is at Kasvin.

Here it may be well to add that if this im-

portant concession slipped out of our hands we have only ourselves to blame. We can in no way accuse the Russians of taking advantage of us, but can only admire them for knowing how to take advantage of a good opportunity. We had the opportunity first; it was offered us in the first instance by Persia which needed a loan of a paltry sixty million francs, or a little over two million pounds sterling. The concession was offered as a guarantee for the loan, but we, as usual, temporised and thought it over and argued—especially the people who did not know what they were arguing about—and eventually absolutely refused to have anything to do with the scheme. The Russians had the next offer and jumped at it, as was natural in people well versed in Persian affairs, and well able to foresee the enormous possibilities of such an undertaking.

It was, beyond doubt, from the very beginning—except to people absolutely ignorant and mentally blind—that the concession, apart from its political importance, was a most excellent financial investment. Not only would the road be most useful for the transit of Russian goods to the capital of Persia, and from there all over the country, but for military purposes it would prove invaluable. Maybe its use in the latter capacity will be shown sooner than we in England think.

Of course, to complete the scheme the landing at Enzeli must still be improved, so that small ships may enter in safety and land passengers and goods each journey without the unpleasant alternative, which we have seen, of having to return

to one's point of departure and begin again, two, or three, or even four times. One gentleman I met in Persia told me that on one occasion the journey from Baku to Enzeli—thirty-six hours—occupied him the space of twenty-six days !

The Caspian is stormy the greater part of the year, the water shallow, no protection from the wind exists on any side, and wrecks, considering the small amount of navigation on that sea, are extremely frequent. As we have seen, there are not more than six feet of water on the bar at Enzeli, but with a jetty which could be built at no very considerable expense (as it probably will be some day) and a dredger kept constantly at work, Enzeli could become quite a possible harbour, and the dangers of long delays and the present risks that await passengers and goods, if not absolutely avoided, would at least be minimised to an almost insignificant degree. The navigation of the lagoon and stream presents no difficulty, and the Russians have already obtained the right to widen the mouth of the Murd-ap at Enzeli, in conjunction with the concession of the Piri-Bazaar-Teheran road.

The road was very easy to make, being mostly over flat country and rising to no great elevation, 5,000 feet being the highest point. It follows the old caravan track nearly all the way, the only important detour made by the new road being between Paichinar and Kasvin, to avoid the high Kharzan or Kiajan pass—7,500 feet—over which the old track went.

Considering the nature of the country it crosses,



TRAINING ON THE RUSSIAN ROAD BETWEEN RASHT AND TEHRAN.

the new road is a good one and is well kept. Three large bridges and fifty-eight small ones have been spanned across streams and ravines, the longest being the bridge at Menzil, 142 yards long.

From Resht, *via* Deschambe Bazaar, to Kudum the road strikes due south across country. From Kudum (altitude, 292 feet) to Rudbar (665 feet) the road is practically along the old track on the north-west bank of the Kizil Uzen River, which, from its source flows first in a south-easterly direction, and then turns at Menzil almost at a right angle towards the north-east, changing its name into Sefid Rud (the White River). Some miles after passing Rudbar, the river has to be crossed by the great bridge, to reach Menzil, which lies on the opposite side of the stream.

From Menzil to Kasvin the Russian engineers had slightly more trouble in constructing the road. A good deal of blasting had to be done to make the road sufficiently broad for wheeled traffic; then came the important detour, as we have seen, from Paichinar to Kasvin, so that practically the portion of the road from Menzil to Kasvin is a new road altogether, *via* Mala Ali and Kuhim, the old track being met again at the village of Agha Baba.

The width of the road averages twenty-one feet. In difficult places, such as along ravines, or where the road had to be cut into the rock, it is naturally less wide, but nowhere under fourteen feet. The gradient averages 1—20 to 1—24. At a very few points, however, it is as steep as

1 in 15. If the hill portion of the road is excepted, where, being in zig-zag, it has very sharp angles, a light railway could be laid upon it in a surprisingly short time and at no considerable expense, the ground having been made very hard nearly all along the road.

The capital of £340,000 employed in the construction of the road was subscribed in the following manner : 1,000 shares of 1,000 rubles each, or 1,000,000 rubles original capital subscribed in Moscow ; 1,000,000 rubles debentures taken by the Russian Government, and a further 500,000 rubles on condition that 700,000 rubles additional capital were subscribed, which was at once done principally by the original shareholders.

The speculation had from the very beginning a prospect of being very successful, even merely considered as a trade route—a prospect which the British Government, capitalist, and merchant did not seem to grasp, but which was fully appreciated by the quicker and more far-seeing Russian official and trader. Any fair-minded person cannot help admiring the Russian Government for the insight, enterprise and sound statesmanship with which it lost no time in supporting the scheme (discarded by us as worthless), and this it did, not by empty-winded, pompous speeches and temporising promises, to which we have so long been accustomed, but by supplying capital in hard cash, for the double purpose of enhancing to its fullest extent Russian trade and of gaining the strategic advantages of such

an enterprise, which are too palpable to be referred to again.

So it was, that while we in England relied on the everlasting and ever-idiotic notion that Russia would never have the means to take up the loan, being—as we are told—a bankrupt country with no resources, and a Government with no credit and no cash,—that we found ourselves left (and laughed at), having lost an opportunity which will never present itself again, and which will eventually cost us the loss of Northern Persia, if not of the whole of Persia.

Russia—it is only too natural—having once set her foot, or even both feet, on Persian soil, now tries to keep out other nations—which, owing to her geographical position, she can do with no effort and no trouble—in order to enhance her youthful but solid and fast-growing industries and trade.

In the case of the Teheran road, the only one, it must be remembered, leading with any safety to the Persian capital, it is theoretically open to all nations. Practically, Russian goods alone have a chance of being conveyed by this route, owing to the prohibitive Customs duties exacted in Russia on foreign goods in transit for Persia. Russia is already indirectly reaping great profits through this law, especially on machinery and heavy goods that have no option and must be transported by this road. There is no other way by which they can reach Teheran on wheels. But the chief and more direct profit of the enterprise itself is derived from the high tolls

which the Russian Company, with the authorisation of the Persian Government, has established on the road traffic, in order to reimburse the capital paid out and interest to shareholders.

The road tolls are paid at Resht (and at intermediate stations if travellers do not start from Resht), and amount to 4 krans = 1s. 8d. for each pack animal, whether it be a camel, a horse, a mule, or a donkey.

A post-carriage with four horses (the usual conveyance hired between Resht and Teheran) pays a toll of no less than 17s. 2d.

	s.	d.
A carriage with 3 horses . . .	12	6
„ „ 2 „ . . .	8	4
„ „ 1 horse . . .	4	2

A *fourgon*, or luggage van, 4 horses, £1 0s. 10d.

Passengers are charged extra and above these tolls, so that a landau or a victoria, for instance, actually pays £1 8s. for the right of using the road, and a *fourgon* with one's servants, as much as £1 13s. 2d.

The fares for the hire of the conveyance are very high :—

	£	s.	d.
Landau . . .	11	16	7
Victoria . . .	10	16	7
Coupé . . .	11	4	10
Fourgon . . .	10	0	10

As only 72 lbs. of personal luggage are allowed in the landau or 65 lbs. in other carriages, and this weight must be in small packages, one is compelled to hire a second

conveyance, a *fourgon*, which can carry 650 lbs. Every pound exceeding these weights is charged for at the rate of two shillings for every $13\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. of luggage. The luggage is weighed with great accuracy before starting from Resht, and on arrival in Teheran. Care is taken to exact every half-penny to which the company is entitled on luggage fares, and much inconvenience and delay is caused by the Persian officials at the scales. It is advisable for the traveller to be present when the luggage is weighed, to prevent fraud.

It may be noticed that to travel the 200 miles, the distance from Resht to Teheran, the cost, without counting incidental expenses, tips (amounting to some £3 or more), etc.,

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
Landau,	11	16	7	plus toll,	1	8	0	.	13	4	7
Fourgon,	10	0	10	„ „	1	13	2	.	11	14	0
										<hr/>	
Total										£24	18 7

which is somewhat high for a journey of only 72 to 80 hours.

This strikes one all the more when one compares it with the journey of several thousand miles in the greatest of luxury from London across Holland, Germany, Russia, and the Caspian to Enzeli, which can be covered easily by three five-pound notes.

As every one knows, the road from Piri-Bazaar to Kasvin and Teheran was opened for wheel traffic in January 1899.

I am told that in 1899—before the road was completed—a Persian speculator offered the sum of £200 a day to be paid in cash every evening, for the contract of the tolls. The offer was most emphatically refused, as the daily tolls even at that time amounted to between £270 and £300.

In these last three years the road has developed in a most astounding manner, and the receipts, besides being now considerably greater, are constantly increasing. The Russian shareholders and Government can indeed fairly congratulate themselves on the happy success which their well-thought-out investment has fairly won them.

CHAPTER VI

A journey by landau and four—Picturesque coachman—Tolls—Intense moisture—Luxuriant vegetation—Deschambe Bazaar—The silk industry of Ghilan—The cultivation and export of rice—The Governor's energy—Agriculture and Allah—The water question—The coachman's backshish—The White River—Olive groves—Halting places on the road—The effects of hallucination—Princes abundant.

WE have seen how the road was made. Now let us travel on it in the hired landau and four horses driven by a wild-looking coachman, whose locks of jet-black hair protrude on either side of his clean-shaven neck, and match in colour his black astrakan, spherical, brimless headgear. Like all good Persians, he has a much pleated frockcoat that once was black and is now of various shades of green. Over it at the waist he displays a most elaborate silver belt, and yet another belt of leather with a profusion of cartridges stuck in it and a revolver.

Why he did not run over half-a-dozen people or more as we galloped through the narrow streets of Resht town is incomprehensible to me, for the outside horses almost shaved the walls

on both sides, and the splash-boards of the old landau ditto.

That he did not speak volumes for the flexibility and suppleness of Persian men, women and children, of whom, stuck tight against the walls in order to escape being trampled upon or crushed to death, one got mere glimpses, at the speed one went.

The corners of the streets, too, bore ample testimony to the inaccuracy of drivers in gauging distances, and so did the hubs and splash-boards of the post-carriages, all twisted and staved in by repeated collisions.

It is with great gusto on the part of the drivers, but with a certain amount of alarm on the part of the passenger, that one's carriage chips off corner after corner of the road as one turns them, and one gets to thank Providence for making houses in Persia of easily-powdered mud instead of solid stone or bricks.

One's heart gets lighter when we emerge into the more sparsely inhabited districts where fields and heavy vegetation line the road, now very wide and more or less straight. Here the speed is greatly increased, the coachman making ample use of a long stock whip. In Persia one always travels full gallop.

After not very long we pull up to disburse the road toll at a wayside collecting house. There are a great many caravans waiting, camels, mules, donkeys, horsemen, *fourgons*, whose owners are busy counting hard silver krans in little piles of 10 krans each—a

toman, equivalent to a dollar,—without which payment they cannot proceed. Post carriages have precedence over everybody, and we are served at once. A receipt is duly given for the money paid, and we are off again. The coachman is the cause of a good deal of anxiety, for on the chance of a handsome backshish he has indulged in copious advance libations of rum or vodka, or both, the vapours of which are blown by the wind into my face each time that he turns round and breathes or speaks. That this was a case of the horses leading the coachman and not of a man driving the horses, I have personally not the shade of a doubt, for the wretch, instead of minding his horses, hung backwards, the whole way, from the high box, yelling, I do not know what, at the top of his voice, and making significant gestures that he was still thirsty. Coachmen of all countries invariably are.

We ran full speed into caravans of donkeys, scattering them all over the place; we caused flocks of frightened sheep to stampede in all directions, and only strings of imperturbable camels succeeded in arresting our reckless flight, for they simply would not move out of the way. Every now and then I snatched a furtive glance at the scenery.

The moisture of the climate is so great and the heat so intense, that the vegetation of the whole of Ghilan province is luxuriant,—but not picturesque, mind you. There is such a superabundance of vegetation, the plants so crammed

together, one on the top of the other, as it were, all untidy, fat with moisture, and of such deep, coarse, blackish-green tones that they give the scenery a heavy leaden appearance instead of the charming beauty of more delicate tints of less tropical vegetation.

We go through Deschambe Bazaar, a place noted for its fairs.

Here you have high hedges of reeds and hopelessly entangled shrubs; there your eyes are rested on big stretches of agriculture,—Indian corn, endless paddy fields of rice and cotton, long rows of mulberry trees to feed silkworms upon their leaves. Silk is even to-day one of the chief industries of Ghilan. Its excellent quality was at one time the pride of the province. The export trade of dried cocoons has been particularly flourishing of late, and although prices and the exchanges have fluctuated, the average price obtained for them in Resht when fresh was from $20\frac{1}{2}$ krans to $22\frac{1}{2}$ krans (the kran being equivalent to about fivepence).

The cocoon trade had until recently been almost entirely in the hands of Armenian, French and Italian buyers in Resht, but now many Persian merchants have begun to export bales of cocoons direct to Marseilles and Milan, the two chief markets for silk, an export duty of 5 per cent on their value being imposed on them by the Persian Government. The cocoons are made to travel by the shortest routes, *via* the Caspian, Baku, Batum, and the Black Sea.

The year 1900 seems to have been an excep-

tionally good year for the production and export of cocoons. The eggs for the production of silkworms are chiefly imported by Levantines from Asia Minor (Gimlek and Brussa), and also in small quantities from France. According to the report of Mr. Churchill, Acting-Consul at Resht, the quantity of cocoons exported during that year showed an increase of some 436,800 lbs. above the quantity exported the previous year (1899) ; and a comparison between the quantity exported in 1893 and 1900 will show at a glance the enormous apparent increase in the export of dried cocoons from Ghilan.

1893 . . .	76,160 lbs. . .	Value	£6,475
1900 . . .	1,615,488 „ . . .	„	£150,265

It must, however, be remembered that the value given for 1893 may be very incorrect.

Large meadows with cattle grazing upon them ; wheat fields, vegetables of all sorts, vineyards, all pass before my eyes as in a kaleidoscope. A fine country indeed for farmers. Plenty of water—even too much of it,—wood in abundance within a stone's throw.

Next to the silk worms, rice must occupy our attention, being the staple food of the natives of Ghilan and constituting one of the principal articles of export from that province.

The cultivation and the export of rice from Ghilan have in the last thirty years become very important, and will no doubt be more so in the near future, when the mass of jungle and marshes

will be cleared and converted into cultivable land. The Governor-General of Resht is showing great energy in the right direction by cutting new roads and repairing old ones on all sides, which ought to be of great benefit to the country.

In Persia, remember, it is not easy to learn anything accurately. And as for Persian statistics, unwise is the man who attaches any importance to them. Much as I would like to quote statistics, I cannot refrain from thinking that no statistics are a hundredfold better than slipshod, haphazard, inaccurate ones. And this rule I must certainly apply to the export of rice from Ghilan to Europe, principally Russia, during 1900, and will limit myself to general remarks.

Extensive tracts of country have been cleared of reeds and useless vegetation, and converted into paddy fields, the natives irrigating the country in a primitive fashion.

It is nature that is mostly responsible if the crops are not ruined year after year, the thoughtless inhabitants, with their natural laziness, doing little more than praying Allah to give them plenty of rain, instead of employing the more practical if more laborious expedient of artificially irrigating their country in some efficient manner, which they could easily do from the streams close at hand. Perhaps, in addition to this, the fact that water—except rain-water—has ever to be purchased in Persia, may also account to a certain extent for the inability to afford paying for it. In 1899, for instance, rain failed to come and the crops were insufficient even for local

consumption, which caused the population a good deal of suffering. But 1900, fortunately, surpassed all expectations, and was an excellent year for rice as well as cocoons.

We go through thickly-wooded country, then through a handsome forest, with wild boars feeding peacefully a few yards from the road. About every six farsakhs—or twenty-four miles—the horses of the carriage, and those of the fourgon following closely behind, are changed at the post-stations, as well as the driver, who leaves us, after carefully removing his saddle from the box and the harness of the horses. He has to ride back to his point of departure with his horses. He expects a present of two krans,—or more if he can get it—and so does the driver of the fourgon. Two krans is the recognised tip for each driver, and as one gets some sixteen or seventeen for each vehicle,—thirty-two or thirty-four if you have two conveyances,—between Resht and Teheran, one finds it quite a sufficient drain on one's exchequer.

As one gets towards Kudum, where one strikes the Sefid River, we begin to rise and the country gets more hilly and arid. We gradually leave behind the oppressive dampness, which suggests miasma and fever, and begin to breathe air which, though very hot, is drier and purer. We have risen 262 feet at Kudum from 77 feet, the altitude of Resht, and as we travel now in a south-south-west direction, following the stream upwards, we keep getting higher, the elevation at

Rustamabad being already 630 feet. We leave behind the undulating ground, covered with thick forests, and come to barren hills, that get more and more important as we go on. We might almost say that the country is becoming quite mountainous, with a few shrubs here and there and scenery of moderate beauty, (for any one accustomed to greater mountains), but quite "wildly beautiful" for the ordinary traveler. We then get to the region of the grey olive groves, the trees with their contorted, thickly-set branches and pointed leaves. What becomes of the olives? They are exported to Europe,—a flourishing trade, I am told.

One bumps a great deal in the carriage, for the springs are not "of the best," and are hidden in rope bandages to keep them from falling apart. The road, too, is not as yet like a billiard table. The doors of the landau rattle continuously, the metal fastenings having long disappeared, and being replaced by bits of string.

One travels incessantly, baked in the sun by day and chilled by the cold winds at night, trying to get a little sleep with one's head dangling over the side of the carriage, one's legs cramped, and all one's bones aching. But this is preferable to stopping at any of the halting-places on the road, whether Russian or Persian, which are filthy beyond words, and where one is mercilessly swindled. Should one, however, be compelled to stop anywhere it is preferable to go to a thoroughly Persian place, where one meets at least with more courtesy, and where one is imposed

upon in a more modest and less aggressive way than at the Russian places. It must, however, be stated that the Russian places are usually in charge of over-zealous Persians, or else in the hands of inferior Russian subjects, who try to make all they can out of their exile in the lonely stations.

I occasionally halted for a glass of tea at the Persian Khafe-Khanas, and in one of them a very amusing incident happened, showing the serious effects that hallucination may produce on a weak-minded person.

I had got off the carriage and had carried into the khafe-khana my camera, and also my revolver in its leather case which had been lying on the seat of the carriage. At my previous halt, having neglected this precaution, my camera had been tampered with by the natives, the lenses had been removed, and the eighteen plates most of them already with pictures on them—that were inside, exposed to the light and thrown about, with their slides, in the sand. So to avoid a repetition of the occurrence, and to prevent a probable accident, I brought all into the khafe-khana room and deposited the lot on the raised mud portion along the wall, seating myself next to my property. I ordered tea, and the attendant, with many salaams, explained that his fire had gone out, but that if I would wait a few minutes he would make me some fresh *chah*. I consented. He inquired whether the revolver was loaded, and I said it was. He proceeded to the further end of the room, where, turning his

back to me, he began to blow upon the fire, and I, being very thirsty, sent another man to my fourgon to bring me a bottle of soda-water. The imprisoned gases of the soda, which had been lying for the whole day in the hot sun, had so expanded that when I removed the wire the cork went off with a loud report and unfortunately hit the man in the shoulder blade. By association of ideas he made so certain in his mind that it was the revolver that had gone off that he absolutely collapsed in a semi-faint, under the belief that he had been badly shot. He moaned and groaned, trying to reach with his hand what he thought was the wounded spot, and called for his son as he felt he was about to die. We supported him, and gave him some water and reassured him, but he had turned as pale as death.

“What have I done to you that you kill me?” he moaned pitifully.

“But, good man, you have no blood flowing,—look !”

A languid, hopeless glance at the ground, where he had fallen and sure enough, he could find no blood. He tried to see the wound, but his head could not revolve to a sufficiently wide arc of a circle to see his shoulder-blade, so in due haste we removed his coat and waistcoat and shirt, and after slow, but careful, keen examination, he discovered that not only there were no marks of flowing blood, but no trace whatever of a bullet hole in any of his garments. Even then he was not certain, and two small mirrors were sent for, which, by the aid of a sym-

pathising friend, he got at proper angles minutely to survey his whole back.

He eventually recovered, and was able to proceed with the brewing of tea, which he served with terribly trembling hand on the rattling saucer under the tiny little glass.

“It was a very narrow escape from death, sahib,” he said in a wavering voice—“for it might have been the revolver.”

There is nothing like backshish in Persia to heal all wounds, whether real or otherwise, and he duly received an extra handsome one.

In Persia the traveller is particularly struck by the number of Princes one encounters on the road. This is to a certain extent to be accounted for by the fact that the word *khan* which follows a great many Persian names has been translated, mainly by flattering French authors, into the majestic but incorrect word “Prince.” In many cases the suffix of *khan* is an equivalent of Lord, but in most cases it is no more than our nominal “Esquire.”

I met on the road two fellows, one old and very dignified ; the other young, and who spoke a little French. He informed me that they were both Princes. He called his friend “*Monsieur le Prince, mon ami*,” and himself “*Monsieur le Prince, moi !*” which was rather amusing. He informed me that he was a high Customs official, and displayed towards his fellow countrymen on the road a great many qualities that revealed a very mean native indeed.

The elder one wore carpet slippers to which

he had attached—I do not know how—an enormous pair of golden spurs! He was now returning from Russia. He was extremely gentleman-like and seemed very much annoyed at the behaviour of his companion. He begged me to believe that not all men in Persia were like his friend, and I quite agreed with him.

We travelled a great portion of the road together, and the old fellow was extremely civil. He was very well informed on nearly all subjects, and had belonged to the army. He pointed out to me the important sights on the road, such as Mount Janja (7,489 ft.) to the East.

After passing Rudbar (665 ft.) the road is mostly in narrow gorges between mountains. It is rocky and arid, with hardly any vegetation. The river has to be crossed by the new bridge, a handsome and solid structure, and we arrive at the village of Menjil or Menzil. The Russian station-house is the most prominent structure. Otherwise all is desert and barren. Grey and warm reddish tints abound in the dried-up landscape, and only a few stunted olive groves relieve the scenery with some vegetable life.

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CHAPTER VII

Menzil and the winds—The historical Alamut mountain—A low plateau—Volcanic formation—Mol-Ali—A genuine case of smallpox—Characteristic sitting posture—A caravan of mules—Rugged country—The remains of a volcanic commotion—The old track—Kasvin, the city of misfortunes—The Governor's palace and palatial rest house—Earthquakes and famine—*Kanats*, the marvellous aqueducts—How they are made—Manufactures—Kasvin strategically.

PERHAPS Menzil should be mentioned in connection with the terrific winds which, coming from the north-east and from the south, seem to meet here, and blow with all their might at all times of the year. The traveller is particularly exposed to them directly above the river course on crossing the bridge. Menzil is celebrated for these winds, which are supposed to be the worst, in all Persia, but unpleasant as they may be to any one who has not experienced worse, they are merely gentle breezes as compared, for instance, with the wind storms of the Tibetan plateau. To the east there is a very mountainous region, the Biwarzin Yarak range, or Kuse-rud, averaging from 6,000 to 7,000 ft.; further north a peak of 7,850 ft., and south-west of the Janja, 7,489 ft., the high Salambar, 11,290 ft. On the historical Mt. Alamut the old state

prisons were formerly to be found, but were afterwards removed to Ardebil.

From Menzil we have left the Sefid River altogether, and we are now in a very mountainous region, with a singular low plateau in the centre of an extensive alluvial plain traversed by the road. We cross the Shah Rud, or River of the King, and at Paichinar, with its Russian post-house, we have already reached an altitude of 1,800 ft. From this spot the road proceeds through a narrow valley, through country rugged and much broken up, distinctly volcanic and quite picturesque. It is believed that coal is to be found here.

Perhaps one of the prettiest places we had yet come to was Mol-Ali, a lovely shady spot with veteran green trees all round. While the horses were being changed I was asked by the khafe-khana man to go and inspect a man who was ill. The poor fellow was wrapped up in many blankets and seemed to be suffering greatly. He had very high fever and his was a genuine case of smallpox. Next to him, quite unconcerned, were a number of Persian travellers, who had halted here for refreshments. They were squatting on their heels, knees wide apart, and arms balanced, resting above the elbow on their knees—the characteristic sitting posture of all Asiatics. Very comfortable it is, too, when you learn to balance yourself properly and it leaves the free use of one's arms. The *kalian* was being passed round as usual, and each had a thimble-full of sugared tea.

I was much attracted by a large caravan of handsome mules, the animals enjoying the refreshing shade of the trees. They had huge saddles ornamented with silver pommels and rings and covered over with carpets. Variegated cloth or carpet or red and green leather saddlebags hung on either side of the animals behind the saddles. The bridle and bit were richly ornamented with shells and silver or iron knobs.

The few mud houses in the neighbourhood had flat roofs and were not sufficiently typical nor inviting enough for a closer internal inspection.

We are now on a tributary of the Shah-rud on the new road, instead of the old caravan track, which we have left since Paichinar.

The country becomes more interesting and wild as we go on. In the undoubtedly volcanic formation of the mountains one notices large patches of sulphurous earth on the mountain-side, with dark red and black baked soil above it. Over that, all along the range, curious column-like, fluted rocks. Lower down the soil is saturated with sulphurous matter which gives it a rich, dark blue tone with greenish tints in it and bright yellow patches. The earth all round is of a warm burnt sienna colour, intensified, when I saw it, by the reddish, soft rays of a dying sun. It has all the appearance of having been subjected to abnormal heat. The characteristic shape of the peaks of the range is conical, and a great many deep-cut channels and holes are noticeable in the rocky sides of these

sugar-loaf mountains, as is frequently the case in mountains of volcanic formation.

We rise higher and higher in zig-zag though rugged country, and we then go across an intensely interesting large basin, which must at a previous date have been the interior of an exploded and now collapsed volcano. This place forcibly reminded me of a similar sight on a grander scale,—the site of the ex-Bandaian Mountain on the main island of Nippon in Japan, after that enormous mountain was blown to atoms and disappeared some few years ago. A huge basin was left, like the bottom part of a gigantic cauldron, the edges of which bore ample testimony to the terrific heat that must have been inside before the explosion took place. In the Persian scene before us, of a much older date, the basin, corroded as it evidently was by substances heated to a very high temperature and by the action of forming gases, had been to a certain extent obliterated by the softening actions of time and exposure to air. The impression was not so violent and marked as the one received at Bandaian, which I visited only a few days after the explosion, but the various characteristics were similar.

In the basin was a solitary hut, which rejoiced in the name of Kort. These great commotions of nature are interesting, but to any one given to sound reflection they are almost too big for the human mind to grasp. They impress one, they almost frighten one, but give no reposeful, real pleasure in gazing upon them such as less dis-

turbed scenery does. The contrasts in colour and shape are too violent, too crude to please the eye: the freaks too numerous to be comprehensible at a glance. Here we have a ditch with sides perfectly black-baked, evidently by lava or some other hot substance which has flowed through; further on big splashes of violent red and a great variety of warm browns. The eye roams from one spot to the other, trying to understand exactly what has taken place—a job which occupies a good deal of one's time and attention as one drives through, and which would occupy a longer time and study than a gallop through in a post landau can afford.

At Agha Baba we were again on the old track, quite flat now, and during the night we galloped easily on a broad road through uninteresting country till we reached Kasvin, 185 *versts* from Resht.

Kasvin, in the province of Irak, is a very ancient city, which has seen better days, has gone through a period of misfortune, and will in future probably attain again a certain amount of prosperity. It is situated at an altitude of 4,094 feet (at the Indo-European telegraph office), an elevation which gives it a very hot but dry, healthy climate with comparatively cool nights. The town is handsome, square in form, enclosed in a wall with towers.

The governor's palace is quite impressive, with a fine broad avenue of green trees leading from it to the spacious Kasvin rest-house. This

is by far the best rest-house on the road to the Persian capital, with large rooms, clean enough for Persia, and with every convenience for cooking one's food. Above the doorway the Persian lion, with the sun rising above his back, has been elaborately painted, and a picturesque pool of stagnant water at the bottom of the steps is no doubt the breeding spot of mosquitoes and flies, of which there are swarms, to make one's life a misery.

The palatial rest-house, the governor's palace, a mosque or two, and the convenient bath-houses for Mahommedans being barred, there is nothing particular to detain the traveller in Kasvin.

One hears that Kasvin occupied at one time a larger area than Teheran to-day. The remains of this magnitude are certainly still there. The destruction of the city, they say, has been due to many and varied misfortunes. Earthquakes and famines in particular have played an important part in the history of Kasvin, and they account for the many streets and large buildings in ruins which one finds, such as the remains of the Sufi Palace and the domed mosque. The city dates back to the fourth century, but it was not till the sixteenth century that it became the *Dar-el-Sultanat*—the seat of royalty—under Shah Tamasp. It prospered as the royal city until the time of Shah Abbas, whose wisdom made him foresee the dangers of maintaining a capital too near the Caspian Sea. Isfahan was selected as the future capital, from which time Kasvin, semi-abandoned, began its decline.



MAKING A *Kanal*.

In 1870 a famine devastated the town to a considerable extent, but even previous to that a great portion of the place had been left to decay, so that to-day one sees large stretches of ruined houses all round the neighbourhood and in Kasvin itself. The buildings are mostly one-storied, very few indeed boasting of an upper floor. The pleasant impression one receives on entering the city is mostly caused by the quantity of verdure and vegetation all round.

One of the principal things which strike the traveller in Persia, especially on nearing a big city, is the literal myriads of curious conical heaps, with a pit in the centre, that one notices running across the plains in long, interminable rows, generally towards the mountains. These are the *kanats*, the astounding aqueducts with which dried-up Persia is bored in all directions underground, the canals that lead fresh water from the distant springs to the cities, to the villages, and to irrigate the fields. The ancient process of making these *kanats* has descended unchanged to the modern Persian, who is really a marvellous expert—when he chooses to use his skill—at conveying water where Nature has not provided it. I watched some men making one of these *kanats*. They had bored a vertical hole about three feet in diameter, over which a wooden windlass had been erected. One man was working at the bottom of the shaft. By means of buckets the superfluous earth was gradually raised up to the surface, and the hole bored further. The earth removed in the ex-

cavation is then embanked all round the aperture of the shaft. When the required depth is attained a tunnel is pierced, mostly with the hands and a small shovel, in a horizontal direction, and seldom less than four feet high, two feet wide, just big enough to let the workman through. Then another shaft has to be made for ventilation's sake and to raise to the surface the displaced earth. Miles of these *kanats* are thus bored, with air shafts every ten to twenty feet distant. In many places one sees thirty, forty, fifty parallel long lines of these aqueducts, with several thousand shafts, dotting the surface of the ground.

Near ancient towns and villages one finds a great many of these *kanats* dry and disused at present, and nearly everywhere one sees people at work making fresh ones, for how to get water is one of the great and serious questions in the land of Iran. Near Kasvin these *kanats* are innumerable, and the water carried by them goes through the streets of the city, with holes here and there in the middle of the road to draw it up. These holes are a serious danger to any one given to walking about without looking where he is placing his feet. It is mainly due to these artificial water-tunnels that the plain of Kasvin, otherwise arid and oppressively hot, has been rendered extremely fertile.

There are a great many gardens with plenty of fruit-trees. Vineyards abound, producing excellent stoneless grapes, which, when dried, are mostly exported to Russia. Pomegranates, water-

melons, cucumbers, and cotton are also grown. Excellent horses and camels are bred here.

Kasvin being the half-way house, as it were, between Resht and Teheran, and an important city in itself, is bound—even if only in a reflected manner—to feel the good effects of having through communication to the Caspian and the capital made so easy by the completion of the Russian road.

The silk and rice export trade for Bagdad has gone up during the last two years, and in the fertile plain in which Kasvin lies agriculture is beginning to look up again, although not quite so much as in the Resht district, which is naturally the first to reap benefit from the development of Northern Persia.

The chief manufactures of Kasvin are carpets, a kind of coarse cotton-cloth called *kerbas*, velvet, brocades, iron-ware and sword-blades, which are much appreciated by Persians.

There is a large bazaar in which many cheap European goods are sold besides the more picturesque articles of local manufacture.

From a strategical point of view, Kasvin occupies a position not to be overlooked, guarding as it does the principal entrance from the south into the Ghilan province.

CHAPTER VIII

Four thousand feet above sea-level—Castellated walls—An obnoxious individual—Luggage weighing—The strange figure of an African black—How he saved an Englishman's life—Teheran hotels—Interesting guests—Life of bachelors in Teheran—The Britisher in Persia—Home early—Social sets — Etiquette — Missionaries — Foreign communities—The servant question.

A FEW hours' rest to give one's aching bones a chance of returning into their normal condition and position, and amidst the profound salaams of the rest-house servants, we speed away towards Teheran, 130 versts more according to the Russian road measurement (about 108 miles). We gallop on the old, wide and flat road, on which the traffic alone diverts one,—long strings of donkeys, of camels, every now and then a splendid horse with a swaggering rider. We are travelling on the top of the plateau, and are keeping at an altitude slightly above 4,000 feet. Distant mountains lie to the north, otherwise there is absolutely nothing to see, no vegetation worth mentioning, everything dry and barren.

Now and then, miles and miles apart, comes a quadrangular or rectangular, castellated mud wall enclosing a cluster of fruit trees and vege-

table gardens ; then miles and miles again of dreary, barren country.

Were it not for the impudence of the natives—increasing to a maximum—there is nothing to warn the traveller that one is approaching the capital of the Persian Empire, and one finds one's self at the gate of the city without the usual excitement of perceiving from a distance a high tower, or a dome or a steeple or a fortress, or a landmark of some sort or other, to make one enjoy the approach of one's journey's end.

Abdulabad, 4,015 feet, Kishlak, 3,950 feet, Sankarabad, 4,210 feet, Sulimaneh, 4,520 feet, are the principal places and main elevations on the road, but from the last-named place the incline in the plateau tends to descend very gently. Teheran is at an altitude of 3,865 feet.

Six farsakhs from Teheran, where we had to change horses, an individual connected with the transport company made himself very obnoxious, and insisted on accompanying the carriage to Teheran. He was picturesquely attired in a brown long coat, and displayed a nickel-plated revolver, with a leather belt of cartridges. He was cruel to the horses and a nuisance to the coachman. He interfered considerably with the progress of the carriage and made himself unbearable in every possible way. When I stopped at a *khafe-khana* for a glass of tea, he actually removed a wheel of the carriage, which we had considerable difficulty in putting right again, and he pounded the coachman on the head with the butt of his revolver, in order, as far as I could

understand, that he should be induced to go half-shares with him in the backshish that the driver would receive at the end of the stage.

All this provided some entertainment, until we reached the Teheran gate. Only half a mile more and I should be at the hotel. But man proposes and the Persian disposes. The carriage and fourgon were driven into a large courtyard, the horses were unharnessed, all the luggage removed from the fourgon and carriage, and deposited in the dust. A primitive scale was produced and slung to a tripod, and each article weighed and weighed over again so as to take up as much of one's time as possible. Various expedients to impose upon me, having failed I was allowed to proceed, a new fourgon and fresh horses being provided for the journey of half a mile more, the obnoxious man jumping first on the box so as to prevent being left behind.

At last the hotel was reached, and here another row arose with a profusion of blows among a crowd of beggars who had at once collected and disputed among themselves the right of unloading my luggage.

A strange figure appeared on the scene. A powerful, half-naked African, as black as coal, and no less than six foot two in height. He sported a huge wooden club in his hand, which he whirled round in a most dangerous manner, occasionally landing it on people's skulls and backs in a sonorous fashion. The crowd vanished, and he, now as gently as possible,

removed the luggage from the fourgon and conveyed it into the hotel.

The obnoxious man now hastily descended from his seat and demanded a backshish.

“What for?”

“Oh, sir,” intervened a Persian gentleman present, “this man says he has annoyed you all the way, but he could not make you angry. He must have backshish! He makes a living by annoying travellers!”

In contrast to this low, depraved parasite, the African black seemed quite a striking figure,—a scamp, if you like, yet full of character. He was a dervish, with drunken habits and a fierce nature when under the influence of drink, but with many good points when sober. On one occasion an Englishman was attacked by a crowd of Persians, and was in danger of losing his life, when this man, with considerable bravery (not to speak of his inseparable mallet which he used freely), went to the rescue of the sahib and succeeded in saving him. For this act of courage he has ever since been supported by the charity of foreigners in Teheran. He unfortunately spends all his earnings in drink, and can be very coarse indeed, in his songs and imitations, which he delights in giving when under the influence of liquor. He hangs round the hotel, crying out “*Yahu! yahu!*” when hungry—a cry quite pathetic and weird, especially in the stillness of night.

There are two hotels in Teheran and several European and Armenian restaurants. The

English hotel is the best,—not a dream of cleanliness, nor luxury, nor boasting of a cuisine which would remain impressed upon one's mind, except for its elaborate monotony,—but quite a comfortable place by comparison with the other European hotels of Persia. The beds are clean, and the proprietress tries hard to make people comfortable.

More interesting than the hotel itself was the curious crowd of people whom one saw at the dinner-table. I remember sitting down one evening to dinner with nine other people, and we represented no less than ten different nationalities ! The tower of Babel sank almost into insignificance compared with the variety of languages one heard spoken all round, and one's polyglot abilities were tested to no mean extent in trying to carry on a general conversation. One pleasant feature of these dinners was the amount of talent and good-humour that prevailed in the company, and the absolute lack of distinction of class or social position. Side by side one saw a distinguished diplomat conversing with the Shah's automobile driver, and a noteworthy English member of Parliament on friendly terms with an Irish gentleman of the Indo-European Telegraphs. A burly, jolly Dutchman stood drinks all round to members of the Russian and English Banks alike, and a French *sage-femme* just arrived discussed her prospects with the hotel proprietress. The Shah's A.D.C. and favourite music-composer and pianist came frequently to

enliven the evenings with some really magnificent playing, and by way of diversion some wild Belgian employees of the derelict sugar-factory used almost nightly to cover with insults a notable "Chevalier d'industrie" whose thick skin was amazing.

Then one met Armenians—who one was told had come out of jail,—and curio-dealers, mine prospectors, and foreign Generals of the Persian army.

Occasionally there was extra excitement when an engagement or a wedding took place, when the parties usually adjourned to the hotel, and then there was unlimited consumption of beer, nominally (glycerine really, for, let me explain, beer does not stand a hot climate unless a large percentage of glycerine is added to it), and of highly-explosive champagne and French wines, Château this and Château that—of Caspian origin.

Being almost a teetotaller myself, this mixed crowd—but not the mixed drink—was interesting to study, and what particularly struck me was the *bonhomie*, the real good-heartedness, and manly but thoughtful, genial friendliness of men towards one another, irrespective of class, position or condition, except, of course, in the cases of people with whom it was not possible to associate. The hard, mean, almost brutal jealousy, spite, the petty rancour of the usual Anglo-Indian man, for instance, does not exist at all in Persia among foreigners or English people. On the contrary, it is impossible to find more hospitable, more

gentlemanly, polite, open-minded folks than the Britishers one meets in Persia.

Of course, it must be remembered, the type of Britisher one finds in Persia is a specially talented, enterprising and well-to-do individual, whose ideas have been greatly broadened by the study of several foreign languages which, in many cases, have taken him on the Continent for several years in his youth. Furthermore, lacking entirely the ruling "look down upon the native" idea, so prevalent in India, he is thrown much in contact with the Persians, adopting from them the courteous manner and form of speech, which is certainly more pleasant than the absurd rudeness of the "keep-alooof" notion which generally makes us hated by most Orientals.

The Britisher in Persia, with few exceptions, is a charming person, simple and unaffected, and ready to be of service if he can. He is not aggressive, and, in fact, surprisingly suave.

This abnormal feature in the British character is partly due to the climate, hot but very healthy, and to the exile to which the Briton has to reconcile himself for years to come. Indeed, Persia is an exile, a painful one for a bachelor, particularly. Woman's society, which at all times helps to make life sweet and pleasant, is absolutely lacking in Persia. European women are scarce and mostly married or about to get married. The native women are kept in strict seclusion. One never sees a native woman except heavily veiled under her *chudder*, much less can a European talk to her. The laws

of Persia are so severe that anything in the shape of a flirtation with a Persian lady may cost the life of Juliet or Romeo, or both, and if life is spared, blackmail is ever after levied by the police or by the girl's parents or by servants.

In Teheran all good citizens must be indoors by nine o'clock at night, and any one found prowling in the streets after that hour has to deal with the police. In the European quarter this rule is overlooked in the case of foreigners, but in the native city even Europeans found peacefully walking about later than that hour are taken into custody and conveyed before the magistrate, who satisfies himself as to the man's identity and has him duly escorted home.

There are no permanent amusements of any kind in Teheran. An occasional concert or a dance, but no theatres, no music-halls. There is a comfortable Club, where people meet and drink and play cards, but that is all.

Social sets, of course, exist in the Teheran foreign community. There are "The Telegraph" set, "the Bank," "the Legations." There is an uncommon deal of social etiquette, and people are most particular regarding calls, dress, and the number of cards left at each door. It looks somewhat incongruous to see men in their black frock-coats and silk tall hats, prowling about the streets, with mud up to their knees if wet, or blinded with dust if dry, among strings of camels, mules, or donkeys. But that is the fashion, and people have to abide by it.

There are missionaries in Teheran, American

and English, but fortunately they are not permitted to make converts. The English, Russian and Belgian communities are the most numerous, then the French, the Dutch, the Austrian, the Italian, the American.

Taking things all round, the Europeans seem reconciled to their position in Teheran—a life devoid of any very great excitement, and partaking rather of the nature of vegetation, yet with a certain charm in it—they say—when once people get accustomed to it. But one has to get accustomed to it first.

The usual servant question is a very serious one in Teheran, and is one of the chief troubles that Europeans have to contend with. There are Armenian and Persian servants, and there is little to choose between the two. Servants accustomed to European ways are usually a bad lot, and most unreliable; but in all fairness it must be admitted that, to a great extent, these servants have been utterly spoilt by Europeans themselves, who did not know how to deal with them in a suitable manner. I repeatedly noticed in Teheran and other parts of Persia that people who really understood the Persian character, and treated subordinates with consideration, had most excellent servants—to my mind, the most intelligent and hard-working in the world—and spoke very highly of them.

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CHAPTER IX

Teheran—The seat of the Kajar family—The square of the gun—Sanctuaries—The Top Meidan—Tramways—A railway—Opposition of the Mullahs and population—Destruction of a train—Mosques—Habitations—Extortion and blackmail—Persian philosophy.

A DESCRIPTION of Teheran is hardly necessary here, the city being so well-known, but for the help of people unfamiliar with its character a rough sketch of the place may be given.

Teheran, it must be remembered, has only been the capital of Persia for the last hundred years, when the capital was removed from Isfahan. Previous to that it was merely a royal resort and nothing more. In shape it was formerly almost circular—or, to be strictly accurate, polygonal, the periphery of the polygon measuring a *farsakh*, four miles. Like all Persian cities it was enclosed in a mud wall and a moat. Since then the city has so increased that an extension has been made to an outer boundary some ten miles in circumference, and marked by an uneven ditch, the excavated sand of which is thrown up to form

a sort of battlement. Twelve gates, opened at sunrise and closed at night, give access to the town. The citadel, the ancient part of the city, contains the principal public buildings, the private residences of high officials, and the Shah's Palace. To the south of this are found the extensive domed bazaars and the commercial portion of Teheran. To the north lies the European quarter with the Legations, Banks and European shops.

We will not go as far back as the Afghan invasion in 1728 when, according to history, Teheran was looted and razed to the ground by the Afghans, but we will only mention the fact, which is more interesting to us, that it was not till about 1788 that the city was selected on account of its geographical position and of political necessities, as the seat of the Kajar dynasty by Agha Mohammed, who in 1796 became the first King of his family. The Kajar, as everybody knows, has remained the reigning dynasty of Persia to this day.

The most interesting point of Teheran, in the very centre of the city, is the old "Place du Canon," where on a high platform is a gigantic piece of ordnance enclosed by a railing. In the same square is a large reservoir of more or less limpid water, in which at all hours of the day dozens of people are to be seen bathing. But the big gun attracts one's attention principally. A curious custom, which is slowly being done away with, has made this spot a sanctuary. Whoever remains within touch or even within

the shadow of the gun—whether an assassin, a thief, a bankrupt, an incendiary, a traitor or a highwayman,—in fact, a criminal of any kind cannot be touched by the police nor by persons seeking a personal revenge—the usual way of settling differences in Persia. A number of distinctly criminal types can always be observed near the gun and are fed by relations, friends, or by charitable people. Persians of all classes are extremely charitable, not so much for the sake of helping their neighbours in distress, as for increasing their claims to a seat in Paradise, according to the Mussulman religion.

These sanctuaries are common in Persia. The mosques, the principal shrines, such as Meshed, Kum, the houses of Mullahs, and in many cases the bazaars which are generally to be found adjoining places of pilgrimage, afford most convenient shelter to outlaws. The Mullahs are greatly responsible for the protection of miscreants. By exercising it they are able to show their power over the authorities of the country—a fact which impresses the masses. That is why in the neighbourhood of many mosques one sees a great number of ruffianly faces, unmistakable cut-throats, men and boys whose villainy is plainly stamped on their countenances. As long as they remain inside the sacred precincts—which they can do if they like till they die of old age—they can laugh at the law and at the world at large. But let them come out, and they are done for.

The Shah's stables are considered a very safe

sanctuary. Houses of Europeans, or Europeans themselves, were formerly considered sanctuaries, but the habit has—fortunately for the residents—fallen into disuse. I myself, when driving one day in the environs of Teheran, saw a horseman leading a man whose neck was tied to a substantial rope. Much to my surprise, when near enough, the prisoner jumped into my carriage, and it was only after some persuasion on my side and a few pulls at the rope from the rider at the other end that the unwelcome companion was made to dismount again.

When in the company of high Mullahs evil characters are also inviolable.

The largest square in Teheran is the Top Meidan or “Cannon plain,” where several small and antiquated pieces of artillery are enclosed in a fence. Two parallel avenues with trees cross the rectangular square at its longest side from north to south. In the centre is a large covered reservoir. The offices of both the Persian and Indo-European Telegraphs are in this square, and also the very handsome building of the Bank of Persia.

The square is quite imposing at first sight, having on two sides uniform buildings with long balconies. The *lunettes* of the archways underneath have each a picture of a gun, and on approaching the southern gates of the parallelogram a smile is provoked by the gigantic but crude, almost childish representations of modern soldiers on glazed tiles. To the west is the extensive drill ground for the Persian troops.



THE MURDERER OF NASR-ED-DIN SHAH.

Another important artery of Teheran runs from east to west across the same square.

One cannot but be interested on perceiving along the main thoroughfares of Teheran a service of horse tramways working quite steadily. But the rolling stock is not particularly inviting outwardly—much less inwardly. It is mostly for the use of natives and Armenians, and the carriages are very dirty. The horses, however, are good. The Tramway Company in the hands of Russian Jews, I believe, but managed by an Englishman and various foreigners—subalterns—was doing pretty fair business, and jointly with the tramways had established a capital service of “*Voitures de remise*,” which avoided all the trouble and unpleasantness of employing street cabs. The carriages, mostly victorias, were quite good and clean.

Among other foreign things, Teheran can also boast of a railway—a mere steam tramway, in reality—of very narrow gauge and extending for some six miles south of the city to the shrine of Shah Abdul Hazim.

The construction of even so short and unimportant a line met with a great deal of opposition, especially from the priestly class, when it was first started in 1886 by a Belgian company—“*La Société des Chemins de Fer et des Tramways de Perse*.” The trains began to run two years later, in 1888, and it was believed that the enormous crowds of pilgrims who daily visited the holy shrine would avail themselves of the convenience. Huge profits were expected,

but unluckily the four or five engines that were imported at an excessive cost, and the difficulties encountered in laying down the line, which was continually being torn up by fanatics, and, most of all, the difficulty experienced in inducing pilgrims to travel in sufficient numbers by the line instead of on horses, mules or donkeys were unexpected and insoluble problems which the managers had to face, and which made the shareholders grumble. The expenses far exceeded the profits, and the capital employed in the construction of the line was already vastly larger than had been anticipated. One fine day, furthermore, a much-envied and respected pilgrim, who had returned in holiness from the famous shrine of Kerbalah, was unhappily run over and killed by a train. The Mullahs made capital of this accident and preached vengeance upon foreign importations, the work of the devil and distasteful to Allah the great. The railway was mobbed and the engine and carriages became a mass of débris.

There was nearly a serious riot about this in Teheran city; the trains continued to run with the undamaged engines, but no one would travel by them. Result? "La Compagnie des Chemins de Fer et des Tramways de Perse" went bankrupt. The whole concern was eventually bought up cheap by a Russian Company, and is now working again, as far as regards the railway, in a more or less spasmodic manner.

The tramway service connects the three principal gates of the outer wall of Teheran with

the centre of the city “the Place des Canons” (Meidan-Top-Khaned).

Although there are a great many mosques in Teheran city there is not one of great importance or beauty. The Mesjid-i-shah, or the Shah’s Mosque, is the most noteworthy, and has a very decorative glazed tiled façade. Then next in beauty is probably the mosque of the Shah’s mother, but neither is in any way uncommon for size, or wealth, architectural lines, or sacredness. Several mosques have colleges attached to them, as is the usual custom in Persia. Access to the interior of the mosques is not permitted to Europeans unless they have embraced the Mahommedan religion.

Outwardly, there are few native houses in Teheran that impress one with any remarkable features of wealth or beauty; in fact, they are nearly all wretchedly miserable,—a plastered mud or brick wall with a modest little doorway being all one sees from the street of the dwellings of even the richest and noblest of Persians. Inside matters are different. Frequently a miserable little tumbling-down gate gives access, after going through similarly miserable, narrow, low passages, to magnificent palaces and astoundingly beautiful and luxurious courts and gardens. I asked what was the reason of the poor outward appearance of these otherwise luxurious dwellings. Was it modesty,—was it to deceive envious eyes?

There are few countries where blackmail and extortion are carried on on a more extensive and

successful scale than in Persia ; all classes and conditions of people are exposed to the danger, and it is only by an assumed air of poverty that a certain amount of security is obtained. A miserable-looking house, it was explained by a Persian, does not attract the covetous eye of the passer-by ; an unusually beautiful one does. "It is a fatal mistake," he added, "to let anybody's eye rest on one's possessions, whether he be the Shah, a minister, or a beggar. He will want to rest his hands upon them next, and then everything is gone. Besides," he said, "it is the inside of a house that gives pleasure and comfort to the occupier and his friends. One does not build a house to give pleasure and comfort to the people in the street. That is only vainglory of persons who wish to make their neighbours jealous by outward show. They usually have to repent it sooner or later."

There was more philosophy than European minds may conceive in the Persian's words—at least, for Persian householders.

CHAPTER X

Legations—Germany a stumbling-block to Russia's and England's supremacy—Sir Arthur Hardinge, British Minister in Teheran—His talent, tact, and popularity—The British Legation—Summer quarters—Legation guards—Removal of furniture.

As late as 1872 there were only four Legations in Teheran : the English, French, Russian and Turkish ; but since then the Governments of Austria, Belgium, Holland, and the United States have established Legations in the Persian capital. By the Persians themselves only four are considered of first-class importance, viz. : the British, Russian, Turkish and Belgian Legations, as being more closely allied with the interests of the country. The Austrian Legation comes next to these in importance, then the German.

American interests are so far almost a negligible quantity in Persia, but Germany is attempting to force her trade into Persia. In future, if she can realise her railway schemes in Asia Minor, Germany will be a very serious stumbling-block to England's and Russia's supremacy, both in North and Southern Persia. Germany's representative in Teheran is a man

of considerable skill and untiring energy. No doubt that when the opportune time comes and Germany is ready to advance commercially in the Persian market, England in particular will be the chief sufferer, as the British manufacturer has already experienced great difficulty in contending with the cheap German goods. Even in India, where transport is comparatively easy, German goods swamp the bazaars in preference to English goods. Much more will this be the case in Persia when the railway comes to the Persian boundary.

The German Minister is certainly sparing no efforts to foster German interests in Persia, and the enterprising Emperor William has shown every possible attention to the Shah on his visit to Berlin, in order that the racial antipathy, which for some reason or other Persians entertain towards Germans, may with all due speed be wiped out.

To us the British Legation is more interesting at present. We may well be proud of our present Minister, Sir Arthur Hardinge, a man of whose like we have few in our diplomatic service. I do not think that a man more fit for Persia than Sir Arthur could be found anywhere in the British Empire. He possesses quite extraordinary talent, with a quick working brain, a marvellous aptitude for languages—in a few months' residence in Persia he had mastered the Persian language, and is able to converse in it fluently—and is endowed with a gift which few Britishers possess, refined tact and a certain

amount of thoughtful consideration for other people's feelings.

Nor is this all. Sir Arthur seems to understand Orientals thoroughly, and Persians in particular. He is extremely dignified in his demeanour towards the native officials, yet he is most affable and cheery, with a very taking, charming manner. That goes a much longer way in Persia than the other unfortunate manner by which many of our officials think to show dignity—sheer stiffness, rudeness, bluntness, clumsiness—which offends, offends bitterly, instead of impressing.

A fluent and most graceful speaker, with a strong touch of Oriental flowery forms of speech in his compliments to officials, with an eye that accurately gauges situations—usually in Persia very difficult ones—a man full of resource and absolutely devoid of ridiculous insular notions—a man who studies hard and works harder still—a man with unbounded energy and an enthusiast in his work—a man who knows his subject well, although he has been such a short time in Teheran—this is our British Minister at the Shah's Court.

Nor is this faint praise. Sir Arthur Hardinge has done more in a few months to save British prestige and to safeguard British interests in Persia than the public know, and this he has done merely by his own personal genius and charm, rather than by instructions or help from the home Government.

While in Teheran I had much opportunity of

meeting a great many high Persian officials, and all were unanimous in singing the praises of our new Minister. Many of them seemed very bitter against some of his predecessors, but whether the fault was in the predecessors themselves or in the home Government, it is not for me to say. Anyhow, bygones are bygones, and we must make the best of our present opportunities. The staff at our Legation and Consulate is also first-class.

It is to be hoped, now that the South African war is over, that the Government will be able to devote more attention to the Persian Question, a far more serious matter than we imagine ; and as extreme ignorance prevails in this country about Persia—even in circles where it should not exist—it would be well, when we have such excellent men as Sir Arthur Hardinge at the helm, in whose intelligence we may confidently and absolutely trust, to give him a little more assistance and freedom of action, so as to allow him a chance of safeguarding our interests properly, and possibly of preventing further disasters.

It is not easy for the uninitiated to realise the value of certain concessions obtained for the British by Sir Arthur Hardinge, such as, for instance, the new land telegraph line *via* Kerman Beluchistan to India. Of the petroleum concessions, of which one hears a great deal of late, I would prefer not to speak.

The Legation grounds in Teheran itself are extensive and beautiful, with a great many fine

trees and shady, cool avenues. The Legation house is handsomely furnished, and dotted all over the gardens are the various other buildings for secretaries, attachés, and interpreters. All the structures are of European architecture—simple, but solid. In summer, however, all the Legations shift their quarters to what is called in Teheran “*la campagne de Golahek, de Tejerish, de Zargandeh*,”—by which gracefully misleading and misapplied terms are indicated the suburban residences of the Legations, at the foot of the arid, barren, hot, dusty Shamran range of mountains.

Golahek, where the British Legation is to be found, does actually boast of a few green trees in the Legation grounds ; and a cluster or two of nominally “green” vegetation—really whitish brown—can be seen at Zargandeh, where the Russian and Belgian Legations are side by side, and Tejerish, where the Persian Foreign Office and many Persian officials have their summer residences.

The drive from Teheran to Golahek—seven miles—is dusty beyond words. There are wretched-looking trees here and there along the road, so dried and white with dust as to excite compassion. Half-way to Golahek the monotony of the journey is broken by a sudden halt at a khafe-khana, into which the coachman rushes, leaving the horses to take care of themselves, while he sips refreshing glasses of tea. When it suits his convenience he returns to splash buckets of water between the horses’ legs

and under their tails. This, he told me, in all seriousness, was to prevent sunstroke (really, the Persian can be humorous without knowing it), and was a preventive imported with civilised ways from Europe ! The ears and manes of the animals are then pulled violently, after which the horses are considered able to proceed.

The Persian Government gives each Legation a guard of soldiers. The British Legation is guarded by infantry soldiers—an untidy, ragged, undisciplined lot, with cylindrical hats worn at all angles on the side of the head, and with uniforms so dirty and torn that it is difficult to discern what they should be like. Nearly all other Legations are provided with soldiers of the (Persian) Cossack regiment, who are infinitely better drilled and clothed than the infantry regiments. They are quite military in appearance. It was believed that these Cossacks, being drilled by Russian military instructors, would not be acceptable at the British Legation, hence the guard of infantry soldiers.

The Russian Legation has two additional Russian cavalry soldiers.

The country residences of all the Legations are quite comfortable, pretty and unpretentious, with the usual complement of furniture of folding pattern, so convenient but so inartistic, and a superabundance of cane chairs. Really good furniture being very expensive in Teheran, a good deal of the upholstery of the Teheran Legations is conveyed to the country residences for the summer months. Perhaps nothing is more



PERSIAN COSSACKS (TEHERAN) DRILLED BY RUSSIAN OFFICERS.

amusing to watch than one of these removals to or from the country. Chairs, tables, sofas, and most private effects are tied to pack-saddles on ponies, mules or donkeys, with bundles of mattresses, blankets, and linen piled anyhow upon them, while the more brittle articles of the household are all amassed into a high pyramid on a gigantic tray and balanced on a man's head. Rows of these equilibrists, with the most precious glass and crockery of the homestead, can be noticed toddling along on the Golahek road, dodging carriages and cavaliers in a most surprising manner. They are said never to break even the smallest and most fragile articles, but such is certainly not the case with the heavily laden donkeys and mules; which often collide or collapse altogether, with most disastrous results to the heavier pieces of furniture.

On my arrival in Teheran I received a most charming invitation to go and stay at the British Legation, but partly owing to the fact that I wished to remain in town and so be more in touch with the natives themselves, partly because I wished to be unbiassed in any opinion that I might form, I decided not to accept anybody's hospitality while in Teheran. This I am very glad I did, for I feel I can now express an opinion which, whether right or wrong, is my own, and has not been in any way influenced by any one.

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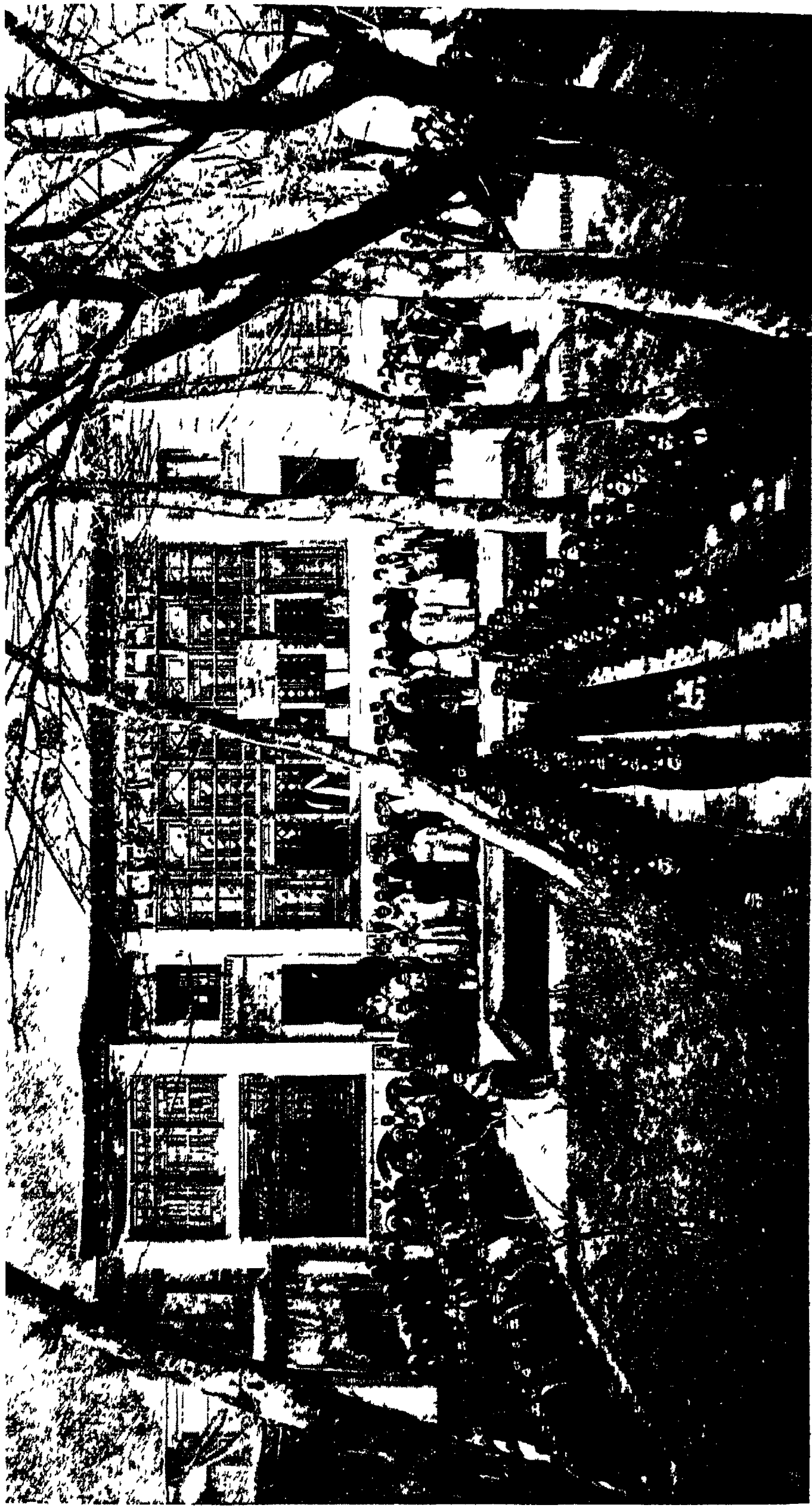
CHAPTER XI

Visits to high Persian officials—Meftah-es-Sultaneh—Persian education—A college for orphans—Uncomfortable etiquette—The Foreign Office—H.E. Mushir-ed-Doulet, Minister of Foreign Affairs—Persian interest in the Chinese War of 1900—Reform necessary.

PERHAPS the description of one or two visits to high Persian officials may interest the reader.

Through the kindness of the Persian Legation in London I had received letters of introduction which I forwarded to their addresses on my arrival in Teheran. The first to answer, a few hours after I had reached Teheran, was Meftah-es-Sultaneh (Davoud), the highest person in the Foreign Office after the Minister, who in a most polite letter begged me to go to tea with him at once. He had just come to town from Tejerish, but would leave again the same evening.

Escorted by the messenger, I at once drove to Meftah's Palace, outwardly, like other palaces, of extremely modest appearance, and entered by a small doorway leading through very narrow passages. Led by my guide, we suddenly passed through a most quaint court, beautifully clean and with a pretty fountain in the centre,—but



THE EFTETAHIÉ COLLEGE, supported by Mestah-el-Mulk.

no time was given me to rest and admire. Again we entered another dark passage, this time to emerge into a most beautiful garden with rare plants and lovely flowers, with a huge tank, fountains playing and swans floating gracefully on the water. A most beautiful palace in European architecture of good taste faced the garden.

I was admitted into a spacious drawing-room, furnished in good European style, where Meftah-es-Sultaneh—a rotund and jovial gentleman—greeted me with effusion. Although he had never been out of Persia, he spoke French, with a most perfect accent, as fluently as a Frenchman.

What particularly struck me in him, and, later, in many other of the younger generation of the upper classes in Persia, was the happy mixture of the utmost charm of manner with a keen business head, delightful tact and no mean sense of humour. Meftah-es-Sultaneh, for instance, spoke most interestingly for over an hour, and I was agreeably surprised to find what an excellent foreign education students can receive without leaving Persia. It is true that Meftah is an exceptionally clever man, who would make his mark anywhere; still it was nevertheless remarkable how well informed he was on matters not concerning his country.

He comes from a good stock. His father, Meftah-el-Mulk, was Minister member of the Council of State, a very wealthy man, who devoted much of his time and money to doing

good to his country. Among the many praiseworthy institutions founded and entirely supported by him was the college for orphans, the Dabetsane Daneshe, and the Eftetahié School. The colleges occupy beautiful premises, and first-rate teachers are provided who instruct their pupils in sensible, useful matters. The boys are well fed and clothed and are made quite happy in every way.

Meftah told me that His Excellency the Minister of Foreign Affairs wished to see me, so it was arranged that I should drive to Tejerish the next morning to the Minister's country residence.

As early as five a.m. the following day I was digging in my trunks in search of my frock-coat, the only masculine attire in Persia that is considered decent, and without which no respectable man likes to be seen. Then for the tall hat ; and with the temperature no less than 98° in the shade I started in an open victoria to drive the nine miles or so to the appointment.

Not being a Persian myself, and not quite sharing the same ideas of propriety, I felt rather ridiculous in my get-up, driving across the sunny, dusty and barren country until we reached the hills. I had to keep my feet under the seat of the carriage, for when the sun's rays (thermometer above 125°) struck my best patent-leather shoes, the heat was well-nigh intolerable.

At last, after going slowly up-hill through winding lanes enclosed in mud walls, and along

dry ditches with desiccated trees on either side, we arrived at the *Campagne de Tejerish*, and pulled up in front of a big gate, at the residence of the Minister.

The trials of the long drive had been great. With the black frock-coat white with dust, my feet absolutely broiled in the patent shoes, and the perspiration streaming down my forehead and cheeks, I really could not help laughing at the absurdity of civilised, or semi-civilised fashions, and at the purposeless suffering inflicted by them.

There were a number of soldiers at the gate with clothes undone—they were practical people—and rusty muskets resting idle on a rack.

“Is Meftah-es-Sultaneh here?” I inquired.

“Yes, he is waiting for you,” answered a soldier as he sprang to his feet. He hurriedly buttoned up his coat and hitched his belt, and, seizing a rifle, made a military salute in the most approved style.

An attendant led me along a well-shaded avenue to the house, and here I was ushered into a room where, round tables covered with green cloth, sat a great many officials. All these men wore pleated frock-coats of all tints and gradations of the colours of the rainbow. One and all rose and politely saluted me before I sat down.

Through the passage one could see another room in which a number of other officials, similarly clad and with black astrakan caps, were opening and sorting out correspondence.

Suddenly there was a hurried exit of all present—very much like a stampede. Up the avenue a stately, tall figure, garbed in a whitish frock-coat over which a long loose brown coat was donned, walked slowly and ponderously with a crowd of underlings flitting around—like mosquitoes round a brilliant light. It was Mushir-ed-Doulet, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He turned round, now to one, then to another official, smiling occasionally and bowing gracefully, then glancing fiercely at another and sternly answering a third.

I was rather impressed by the remarkable facility with which he could switch on extreme courteousness and severity, kindness and contempt. His face was at no time, mind you, subjected to very marked exaggerated changes or grimaces, such as those by which we generally expect emotions to show themselves among ourselves, but the changes in his expression, though slight, were quite distinct and so expressive that there was no mistake as to their meaning. A soft look of compassion ; a hard glance of offended dignity ; the veiled eyes deeply absorbed in reflection ; the sudden sparkle in them at news of success, were plainly visible on his features, as a clerk approached him bringing correspondence, or asking his opinion, or reporting on one matter or another.

A considerable amount of the less important business was disposed of in this fashion, as the Minister strode up the avenue to the Foreign Office building, and more still with two or three



H. E. MUSHIR-ED-DOULET, Minister of Foreign Affairs

of the more important personages who escorted him to his tents some little way from the avenue.

Meftah-es-Sultaneh, who had disappeared with the Minister, hurriedly returned and requested me to follow him. On a sofa under a huge tent, sat Mushir-ed-Doulet, the Minister, who instantly rose and greeted me effusively as I entered. He asked me to sit on his right on the sofa while Meftah interpreted. His Excellency only spoke Persian. Cigarettes, cigars, coffee and tea were immediately brought.

The Minister had a most intelligent head. As can be seen by the photograph here reproduced, he might have passed for a European. He was extremely dignified and business-like in his manner. His words were few and much to the point.

Our interview was a pleasant one and I was able to learn much of interest about the country. The Minister seemed to lay particular stress on the friendly relations of Russia and England, and took particular care to avoid comments on the more direct relations between Persia and Russia.

One point in our conversation which his Excellency seemed very anxious to clear up was, what would be the future of China? He seemed keenly interested in learning whether Russia's or England's influence had the supremacy in the Heavenly Empire, and whether either of these nations was actually feared by the Chinese.

“Will the Chinese ever be able to fight

England or Russia with success? Were the Chinese well-armed during the war of 1900? If properly armed and drilled, what chances had the Chinese army of winning against the Allies? Would China be eventually absorbed and divided into two or more shares by European powers, or would she be maintained as an Empire?"

Although the Minister did not say so himself, I could not help suspecting that in his mind the similarity and probably parallel futures of China and Persia afforded ground for reflection.

There is no doubt that in many ways the two countries resemble one another politically, although Persia, owing to her more important geographical position, may have a first place in the race of European greed.

The interest displayed by Persians of all classes in the Chinese war of 1900 was intense, and, curiously enough, the feeling seemed to prevail that China had actually won the war because the Allies had retreated, leaving the capital and the country in the hands of the Chinese.

"More than in our actual strength," said a Persian official once to me, "our safety lies in the rivalry of Great Britain and Russia, between which we are wedged. Let those two nations be friends and we are done for!"

After my visit to the Minister of Foreign Affairs I had the pleasure of meeting the Prime Minister, the Minister of War, and the Minister of Public Works. I found them all extremely interesting and courteous and well up in their work. But although talent is not

lacking in Persia among statesmen, the country itself, as it is to-day, does not give these men an opportunity of shining as brightly as they might. The whole country is in such a decayed condition that it needs a thorough overhauling. Then only it might be converted into quite a formidable country. It possesses all the necessary requirements to be a first-class nation. Talent in exuberance, physical strength, a convenient geographical position, a good climate, considerable mineral and some agricultural resources, are all to be found in Persia. All that is wanted at present is the development of the country on a solid, reliable basis, instead of the insecure, unsteady intrigues upon which business, whether political or commercial, is unfortunately carried on in the present state of affairs.

No one realises this better than the well-to-do Persian, and nothing would be more welcome to him than radical reform on the part of the Shah, and the establishment of the land of Iran on unshakable foundations. With a national debt so ridiculously small as Persia has at present, there is no reason why, with less maladministration, with her industries pushed, with her army reorganised and placed on a serviceable footing, she should not rank as one of the first and most powerful among Asiatic independent nations.

We have seen what young Japan, against all odds, has been able to accomplish in a few years. All the more should a talented race like the

Persians, situated to begin with in a far less remote position than Japan, and therefore more favourably for the acquisition of foreign ways, be able to emulate, and even in a short time surpass, the marvellous success attained by the little Islanders of the Far East.

It is grit that is at present lacking in Persia. The country has a wavering policy that is extremely injurious to her interests. One cannot fail to compare her to a good old ship in a dangerous sea. The men at her helm are perplexed, and cannot quite see a clear way of steering. The waves run high and there are plenty of reefs and rocks about. A black gloomy sky closes the horizon, forecasting an approaching cyclone. The ship is leaking on all sides, and the masts are unsteady ; yet when we look at the number of rocks and reefs and dangers which she has steered clear through already, we cannot fail to have some confidence in her captain and crew. Maybe, if she is able to resist the fast-approaching and unavoidable clash of the wind and sea (figuratively England is the full-blown wind, Russia the sea)—she may yet reach her destination, swamped by the waves, dismantled, but not beyond repair. Her damage, if one looks at her with the eye of an expert, is after all not so great, and with little present trouble and expense she will soon be as good as new. Not, however, if she is left to rot much longer.

Such is Persia at present. The time has come when she must go back into the shelter of a safe harbour, or face the storm.

CHAPTER XII

The Persian army—The Persian soldier as he is and as he might be—When and how he is drilled—Self-doctoring under difficulties—Misappropriation of the army's salary—Cossack regiments drilled by Russian officers—Death of the Head Mullah—Tribute of the Jews—The position of Europeans—A gas company—How it fulfilled its agreement.

A PAINFUL sight is the Persian army. With the exception of the good Cossack cavalry regiment, properly fed, dressed, armed and drilled by foreign instructors such as General Kossakowski, and Russian officers, the infantry and artillery are a wretched lot. There is no excuse for their being so wretched, because there is hardly a people in Asia who would make better soldiers than the Persians if they were properly trained. The Persian is a careless, easy-going devil, who can live on next to nothing ; he is a good marksman, a splendid walker and horseman. He is fond of killing, and cares little if he is killed—and he is a master at taking cover. These are all good qualities in a soldier, and if they were brought out and cultivated ; if the soldiers were punctually paid and fed and clothed and armed, there is no reason why Persia should not have as good an army as any other nation. The

material is there and is unusually good ; it only remains to use it properly.

I was most anxious to see the troops at drill, and asked a very high military officer when I might see them.

“ We do not drill in summer,” was the reply, “ it is too hot ! ”

“ Do you drill in winter ? ”

“ No, it is too cold.”

“ Are the troops then only drilled in the autumn and spring ? ”

“ Sometimes. They are principally drilled a few days before the Shah’s birthday, so that they may look well on the parade before his Majesty.”

“ I suppose they are also only dressed and shod on the Shah’s birthday ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ What type and calibre rifle is used in the Persian army ? ”

“ Make it plural, as plural as you can. They have every type under the sun. But,” added the high military officer, “ we use of course ‘ bullet rifles ’ (*fusils à balle*) not ‘ small shot guns ’ ! ”

This “ highly technical explanation ” about finished me up.

As luck or ill-luck would have it, I had an accident which detained me some four weeks in Teheran. While at the Resht hotel, it may be remembered how, walking barefooted on the matting of my room, an invisible germ bored its way into the sole of my foot, and I could not get it out again. One day, in attempting to make its life as lively as the brute made my foot, I



PERSIAN SOLDIERS—THE BAND.



proceeded to pour some drops of concentrated carbolic acid upon the home of my invisible tenant. Unluckily, in the operation my arm caught in the blankets of my bed, and in the jerk the whole contents of the bottle flowed out, severely burning all my toes and the lower and upper part of my foot, upon which the acid had quickly dripped between the toes.

With the intense heat of Teheran, this became a very bad sore, and I was unable to stand up for several days. Some ten days later, having gone for a drive to get a little air, a carriage coming full gallop from a side street ran into mine, turning it over, and I was thrown, injuring my leg very badly again ; so with all these accidents I was detained in Teheran long enough to witness the Shah's birthday, and with it, for a few days previous, the "actual drilling of the troops."

I have heard it said, but will not be responsible for the statement, that the troops are nearer their full complement on such an auspicious occasion than at any other time of the year, so as to make a "show" before his Majesty. Very likely this is true. When I was in Teheran a great commotion took place, which shows how things are occasionally done in the land of Iran. The ex-Minister of War, Kawam-ed-douleh, who had previously been several times Governor of Teheran, was arrested, by order of the Shah, for embezzling a half year's pay of the whole Persian army. Soldiers were sent to his country residence and the old man, tied on a white mule, was dragged into Teheran. His cap having

been knocked off—it is a disgrace to be seen in public without a hat—his relations asked that he should be given a cap, which concession was granted, on payment of several hundred tomans. A meal of rice is said to have cost the prisoner a few more hundred tomans, and so much salt had purposely been mixed with it that the thirsty ex-Minister had to ask for copious libations of water, each tumbler at hundreds of tomans.

Several other high officials were arrested in connection with these army frauds, and would probably have lost their heads, had it not been for the special kindness of the Shah who punished them by heavy fines, repayment of the sums appropriated, and exile. It is a well-known fact in Persia that whether the frauds begin high up or lower down in the scale of officials, the pay often does not reach the private soldier, and if it does is generally reduced to a minimum.

The food rations, too, if received by the men at all, are most irregular, which compels the soldiers to look out for themselves at the expense of the general public. This is a very great pity, for with what the Shah pays for the maintenance of the army, he could easily, were the money not appropriated for other purposes, keep quite an efficient little force, properly instructed, clothed, and armed.

The drilling of the soldiers, which I witnessed just before the Shah's birthday, partook very much of the character of a theatrical performance. The drilling, which hardly ever lasted more than a couple of hours a day, was limited

to teaching the soldiers how to keep time while marching and presenting arms. The brass bands played *fortissimo*—but not *benissimo*—all the time, and various evolutions were gone through in the spacious *place d'armes* before the Italian General, in Persian employ, and a bevy of highly-dressed Persian officers. There was a great variety of ragged uniforms, and head-gears, from kolah caps to brass and tin helmets, and the soldiers' ages ranged from ten to sixty.

The soldiers seemed very good-humoured and obedient, and certainly, when I saw them later before the Shah in their new uniforms, they looked quite different and had not the wretched appearance they present in daily life.

But these infantry soldiers do not bear comparison with the Russian-drilled Persian Cossacks. The jump is enormous, and well shows what can be done with these men if method and discipline are used. Of course perfection could not be expected in such a short time, especially considering the difficulties and interference which foreign officers have to bear from the Persians, but it is certainly to be regretted that such excellent material is now practically wasted and useless.

There were several other excitements before I left Teheran. The head Mullah—a most important person—died, and the whole population of Teheran turned out to do him honour when his imposing funeral took place. Curiously enough, the entire male Jewish community marched in the funeral procession—an event unprecedented, I am told, in the annals of Persian

Mussulman history. The head Mullah, a man of great wisdom and justice, had, it was said, been very considerate towards the Jews and had protected them against persecution : hence this mark of respect and grief at his death.

The discovery of the ex-Minister of War's frauds, the death of the head Mullah, the reported secret attempts to poison the Shah, the prospects of a drought, the reported murder of two Russians at Resht, and other minor sources of discontent, all coming together, gave rise to fears on the part of Europeans that a revolution might take place in Teheran. But such rumours are so very frequent in all Eastern countries that generally no one attaches any importance to them until it is too late. Europeans are rather tolerated than loved in Persia, and a walk through the native streets or bazaars in Teheran is quite sufficient to convince one of the fact. Nor are the Persians to be blamed, for there is hardly a nation in Asia that has suffered more often and in a more shameful manner from European speculators and adventurers than the land of Iran.

Perhaps the country itself, or rather the people, with their vainglory and empty pomp, are particularly adapted to be victimised by impostors and are easy preys to them. Some of the tricks that have been played upon them do not lack humour. Take, for instance, the pretty farce of the *Compagnie générale pour l'éclairage et le chauffage en Perse*, which undertook to light the city of Teheran with no less than one thousand

gas lights. Machinery was really imported at great expense from Europe for the manufacture of the gas—many of the heavier pieces of machinery are still lying on the roadside between Resht and Teheran—extensive premises were built in Teheran itself, and an elaborate doorway with a suitable inscription on it, is still to be seen ; but the most important part of all—the getting of the coal from which the gas was to be extracted—had not been considered. The Lalun coal mines, which offered a gleam of hope to the shareholders, were exploited and found practically useless. The Company and Government came to loggerheads, each accusing the other of false dealing, and the result was that the Persians insisted on the Company lighting up Teheran with the agreed 1,000 lights. If gas could not be manufactured, oil lights would do. There was the signed agreement and the Company must stick to it.

The Company willingly agreed, but as the document did not specify the site where each lamp-post should be situated nearly all were erected, at a distance of only a few feet from one another—a regular forest of them—in the two main streets of the European settlement.

One single man is employed after dark to set the lamps alight, and when he has got to the end of the two streets he proceeds on his return journey to blow them all out again. By ten o'clock everything is in perfect darkness.

The Company now claim that they have fulfilled their agreement !

The Belgian Company for the manufacture of Beetroot Sugar was another example of how speculations sometimes go wrong, and no wonder. In theory the venture seemed quite sound, for the consumption of sugar in Persia is large, and if it had been possible to produce cheap sugar in the country instead of importing it from Russia, France and India, huge profits would have been probable ; but here again the same mistake was made as by the gas company. The obtaining of the raw material was neglected.

The sugar refinery was built at great cost in this case, too, machinery was imported to manufacture the three qualities of sugar most favoured by the Persians—loaf sugar, crystallised sugar, and sugar-candy,—but all this was done before ascertaining whether it was possible to grow the right quality of beetroot in sufficient quantities to make the concern pay. Theoretically it was proved that it would be possible to produce local sugar at a price which, while leaving the Company a huge profit, would easily beat Russian sugar, by which French and Indian sugar have now been almost altogether supplanted.

A model farm was actually started (and is still in existence) near Shah-Abdul Azim, where beetroot was to be grown in large quantities, the experts declaring that the soil was better suited for the crop than any to be found in Europe. Somehow or other it did not answer as well as expected. Moreover, the question of providing coal for the engines proved—as in the case of the

Gas Company—to be another serious stumbling block. An attempt to overcome this difficulty by joining with the Gas Company in working the Lalun Mines was made, but, alas! proved an expensive failure.

Moreover, further difficulties were encountered in obtaining the right manure for the beetroots, in order that the acids, which delay crystallisation, might be eliminated; and the inexperience, carelessness and reluctance with which the natives took up the new cultivation—and, as it did not pay, eventually declined to go on with it—render it by no means strange that the sugar factory, too, which was to make the fortunes of so many became a derelict enterprise.

CHAPTER XIII

Cash and wealth—Capital as understood by Persians—Hidden fortunes—Forms of extravagance—Unbusiness-like qualities—Foreign examples—Shaken confidence of natives in foreigners—Greed for money—Small merchants—Illicit ways of increasing wealth—The Persian a dreamer—Unpunctuality—Time no money and no object—Hindrance to reform—Currency—Gold, silver, and copper—Absorption of silver—Drainage of silver into Transcaspia—Banknotes—The fluctuations of the *Kran*—How the poorer classes are affected by it—Coins old and new—Nickel coins—The *Shai* and its subdivisions.

THE Persian does not understand the sound principles on which alone extensive business can be successful. Partly owing to prevailing circumstances he is under the misapprehension that hard cash is synonymous with wealth, and does not differentiate between treasure, savings, and savings transformed into capital. This is probably the main cause of the present anaemic state of business in the Shah's Empire. Thus, when we are told there is in Persia enormous "capital" to be invested, we are not correctly informed. There are "enormous accumulations of wealth" lying idle, but there is no "capital" in the true meaning of the word. These huge sums in hard cash, in jewellery, or bars of gold and silver, have been

hidden for centuries in dark cellars, and for any good they are to the country and commerce at large might as well not exist at all.

Partly owing to the covetousness of his neighbours, partly owing to a racial and not unreasonable diffidence of all around him, and to the fact that an Asiatic always feels great satisfaction in the knowledge that he has all his wealth within his own reach and protection, rich men of Persia take particular care to maintain the strictest secrecy about their possessions, and to conceal from the view of their neighbours any signs which might lead them to suspect the accumulation of any such wealth. We have already seen how even the houses of the wealthiest are purposely made humble outwardly so as to escape the notice of rapacious officials, and it is indeed difficult to distinguish from the outside between the house of a millionaire and that of a common merchant.

The Persian, it must be well understood, does not hide his accumulated treasure from avaricious reasons ; on the contrary, his inclinations are rather toward extravagance than otherwise, which extravagance he can only satisfy under a mask of endless lies and subterfuges. No honest ways of employing his wealth in a business-like and safe manner are open to the rich Persian under the present public maladministration, nor have the foreign speculations in the country offered sufficient examples of success to induce natives to embark upon them again. Far from it ; these enterprises have even made Persians more sceptical and close than before, and have certainly not

shown foreign ways of transacting business at the best.

That is why, no other way being open to him, the Persian who does wish to get rid of his wealth, prefers to squander his money, both capital and income (the latter if he possesses land), in luxurious jewellery and carpets, and in unhealthy bribery and corruption, or in satisfying caprices which his voluptuous nature may suggest. The result? The Persian is driven to live mostly for his vanity and frivolity—two unbusiness-like qualities not tending to the promotion of commercial enterprise on a large scale, although it is true that in a small way his failings give rise and life to certain industries. For instance, even in remote, poor and small centres where food is scarce and the buildings humble, one invariably finds a goldsmith, filigree-workers and embroidery makers, whereas the necessities of life may be more difficult to obtain.

Of course Persia contains a comparatively small number of Persians of a more adventurous nature, men who have travelled abroad and have been bitten with the Western desire for speculation to increase their money with speed, if not always with safety ; but even these men have mostly retired within their shells since the colossal *fiascos* of the speculations started in Persia by foreign “company promoters.” A considerable number of Persians, seduced by glowing prospectuses and misplaced faith in everything foreign, were dreadfully taken in by the novel experiments—everything novel attracts the Persian considerably

—and readily unearthed solid gold and silver bars, that had lain for centuries in subterranean hiding-places, and now came out to be converted into shares in the various concerns, hardly worth the paper on which they were printed, but promising—according to the prospectus—to bring the happy possessors fabulous incomes.

We have seen how the Sugar Refinery, the Glass Factory, the “Gas” Company—a more appropriate name could not have been given—and the ill-fated Mining Company have created well-founded suspicion of foreign ways of increasing one’s capital, nor can we with any fairness blame the Persians for returning to their old method of slow accumulation. True enough, a fortune, if discovered, has a fair possibility of being seized in the lump by a greedy official, but that is only a possibility ; whereas, when invested in some foreign speculations the loss becomes a dead certainty ! More even than the actual loss of the money, the Persians who burned their fingers by meddling with foreign schemes felt the scorn of their friends, of whom they had become the laughing stock.

There is no doubt that to-day the confidence of the natives towards foreigners has been very much shaken, and excepting a few men whom they well know, trust and respect, they regard most Europeans as adventurers or thieves. The “treasuring” of capital instead of the investment of it is, therefore, one of the reasons why industries in Persia seldom assume large proportions. It is only the small merchant, content to make a

humble profit, who can prosper in his own small way while more extensive concerns are distrusted.

But it must not be understood that Persians do not care for money. There is, on the contrary, hardly a race of people on the face of the earth with whom the greed for money is developed to such an abnormal extent as in all classes in the land of Iran ! But, you will ask, how can money be procured or increased fast and without trouble in a country where there is no commercial enterprise, where labour is interfered with, where capital cannot have a free outlet or investment ? An opening has to be found in illicit ways of procuring wealth, and the most common form adopted is the loan of money at high interest on ample security. As much as 50 per cent., 80 per cent., 100 per cent. and even more is demanded and obtained as interest on private loans, 15 per cent. being the very lowest and deemed most reasonable indeed ! (This does not apply to foreign banks.) All this may seem strange in a Mussulman country, where it is against all the laws of the Koran to lend money at usury, and it is more strange still to find that the principal offenders are the Mullahs themselves, who reap large profits from such illegal financial operations.

The Persian is a dreamer by nature ; he cannot be said to be absolutely lazy, for he is always absorbed in deep thought—what the thoughts are it does not do to analyse too closely—but he devotes so much time to think-

ing that he seldom can do anything else. His mind—like the minds of all people unaccustomed to hard work and steady, solidly-built enterprise—runs to the fantastic, and he ever expects immense returns for doing nothing. The returns, if any, and no matter how large they may be, are ever too small to satisfy his expectations.

As for time, there is no country where it is worth less than to the natives of Persia. The *mañana* of the Spaniards sinks into perfect insignificance when compared with the habits of the land of Iran. Punctuality is unknown—especially in payments, for a Persian must take time to reflect over everything. He cannot be hurried. A three months' limit of credit—or even six months—seems outrageously short in the eyes of Persians. Twelve months and eighteen, twenty, or twenty-four months suit him better, but even then he is never ready to pay, unless under great pressure. He does disburse the money in the end, capital and interest, but why people should worry over time, and why it should matter whether payment occurs to-day or to-morrow are quite beyond him.

If he does transact business, days are wasted in useless talk and compliments before the subject with which he intends to deal is incidentally approached in conversation, and then more hours and days and weeks, even months have to elapse before he can make up his mind what to do. Our haste, and what we consider smartness in business, are looked upon by the Persian as quite an acute form of lunacy,—and really, when one

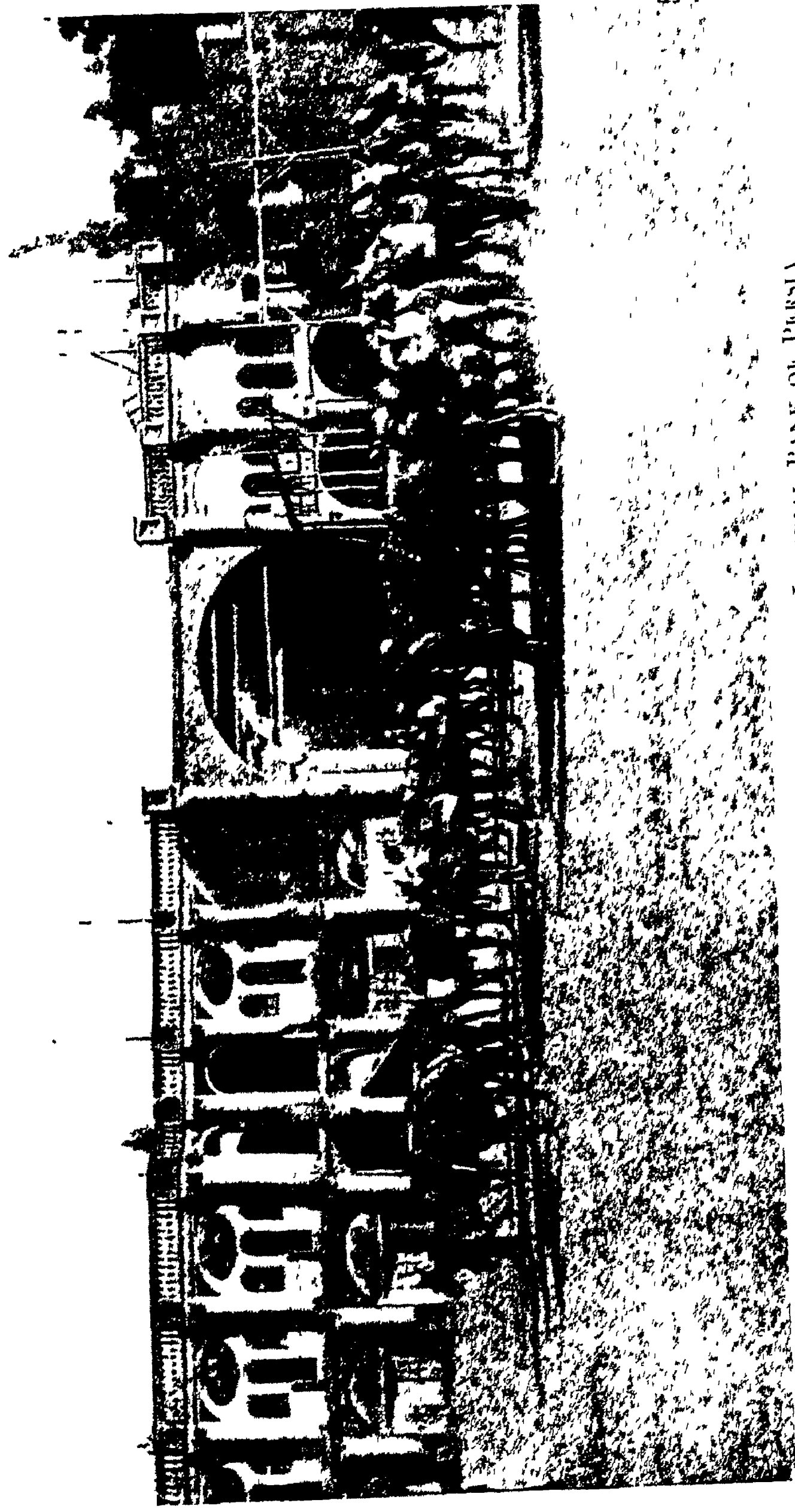
is thrown much in contact with such delightful placidity, almost torpor, and looks back upon one's hard race for a living and one's struggle and competition in every department, one almost begins to fancy that we are lunatics after all !

The Persian must have his hours for praying, his hours for ablutions, more hours for meditation, and the rest for sleep and food. Whether you hasten or not, he thinks, you will only live the number of years that God wills for you, and you will live those years in the way that He has destined for you. Each day will be no longer and no shorter, your life no sadder and no happier. Why then hurry ?

Amid such philosophic views, business in European fashion does not promise to prosper.

Unable to attach a true meaning to words—his language is beautiful but its flowery form conduces to endless misunderstandings—casual to a degree in fulfilling work as he has stipulated to do it ; such is the Persian of to-day. Whether the vicissitudes of his country, the fearful wars, the famines, the climate, the official oppression have made him so, or whether he has always been so, is not easy to tell, but that is how he is now.

Besides all this, each man is endowed with a maximum of ambition and conceit, each individual fully believing himself the greatest man that ever lived and absolute perfection. Moreover the influence of Mullahs is used to oppose reform and improvement, so that altogether the economic development of production, distri-



THE ARRIVAL OF A CARAVAN OF SILVER AT THE IMPERIAL BANK OF PERSIA

bution and circulation of capital is bound to be hampered to no mean extent. On examining things carefully it seems almost astonishing that the trade of Persia should be as well developed as it is.

Another difficulty in the way is the currency, which offers some interesting lessons, and I am indebted to the author of a paper read before the Statistical Society for the following details.

Gold is not produced in Persia. Bar gold is imported in very small quantities only. Gold coin is a mere commodity—is quite scarce, and is mostly used for presents and hoarding. It is minted principally from Russian Imperials and Turkish pounds which drift into Persia in small quantities in the course of business. Goldsmiths, too, in their work, make use of foreign coins, although some gold and silver bullion is imported for manufacturing purposes.

Silver, too, is not obtainable in Persia except in very small quantities, and the imported silver comes from Great Britain, *via* the Gulf or *via* Hamburg and Russia. In the year 1901 the Persian Government, in connection with the Russian Loan, imported some three million tomans' worth of silver to be minted, and the Imperial Bank of Persia another million tomans; while some 500,000 tomans more were brought into the country by other importers. But under normal circumstances the annual output hardly ever exceeds three to four million tomans. In 1900 it was something between 2,000,000 and 2,500,000 tomans.

The Mint—like all other institutions of Persia—is in a tumbling-down condition, with an ancient plant (1877) so obsolete and worn as to be almost useless. Partly owing to the insufficient production of coin, partly because of the export in great quantities of Persian silver coin into Transcaspia, and, last but not least, owing to the Persian custom of “making a corner” by speculators, the commercial centres of Persia suffer from a normal dearth of silver coins. Persian silver coin has for the foregoing reasons a purchasing power of sometimes 20 per cent. beyond its intrinsic value. In distant cities, like Yezd or Kerman, it is difficult to obtain large sums in silver coin at face value, as it disappears into the villages almost as soon as it arrives by caravan or post. New coin is generally in great demand and commands a premium.

So the yearly drain of silver coin from Teheran as soon as it is minted is very considerable, especially to the north, north-east and north-west provinces. This coin does not circulate but is almost entirely absorbed and never reappears, the people themselves holding it, as we have seen, as treasure, and huge quantities finding their way into Transcaspia and eventually into Afghanistan, where Persian coin is current and at a premium, especially on the border land.

In Transcaspia Persian coin is cherished because the nominally equivalent Persian coin contains a much larger quantity of silver than the Russian. Russian silver is a mere token of currency, or, at best, stands midway between a

token and a standard or international currency, and its difference when compared with the Persian coin amounts to no less than 21·92 per cent in favour of the Persian. Persian coin, although defective and about 2 per cent below legal weight and fineness, is a standard or international currency.

It appears that a good deal of the silver exported into Transcaspia finds its way to Chinese Turkestan, where it is converted into bars and ingots, and is used for the inland trade to China. The Russian Government have done all in their power to prevent the competition of Persian and Russian coins in their Transcaspian provinces. A decree was issued some eleven years ago forbidding the importation, and in 1897 a second Ukase further prohibited foreign silver from entering the country after the 13th of May (1st of May of our calendar), and a duty of about 20 per cent was imposed on silver crossing the frontier. All this has resulted in silver entering the provinces by smuggling instead of openly, but it finds its way there in large quantities just the same as before.

The Government of Persia does not issue bank-notes, which would be regarded with suspicion among the people, but it is interesting to find that the monopoly granted to the Imperial Bank of Persia for the issue of paper money has had excellent results, in Teheran particularly, where the Bank is held in high esteem and the notes have been highly appreciated. In other cities of Persia which I visited,

however, the notes did not circulate, and were only accepted at the Bank's agencies and in the bazaar by some of the larger merchants at a small discount.

Naturally, with the methods adopted by Persians, and the insecurity which prevails everywhere, the process of convincing the natives that a piece of printed paper is equivalent to so many silver krans, and that the silver krans will surely be produced in full on demand is rather a slow one; but the credit of the Imperial Bank and the popular personality of Mr. Rabino, the manager, have done much towards dispelling the suspicions, and since 1890 the notes have assumed a considerable place in the circulation. In September 1890 the circulation of them amounted to 29,000 tomans; in 1895 it had gradually increased to 254,000 tomans, and by leaps and bounds had reached the sum of 1,058,000 in 1900.¹ It is rather curious to note that in the previous year, 1899, the note circulation was 589,000 tomans, and became very nearly double in the following twelve months.

This only applies to Teheran and the principal cities; in the villages, and in out-of-the-way towns, notes are out of the question, and even silver coins are very scarce. A two-kran piece of the newer type is seldom found, and only one-kran pieces, little irregular lumps of silver, are occasionally to be seen. Copper is really the currency and is a mere subsidiary or token coinage with a value fluctuating according to

¹ I understand this figure has since considerably increased.

local dearth or other causes at almost every place one goes to.

The precarious system of farming, accompanied by the corruption of officials, has given an opportunity for most frequent and flagrant abuses in the excessive over-issue of copper coin, so that in many cities copper issued at the nominal value of 20 shais per kran was current at 30, 40, 50, and even, in Eastern Persia, at 80 shais per kran. I myself, on travelling through Persia, never knew exactly what a kran was worth, as in almost every province I received a different exchange of shais for my krans. In Birjand and Sistan, particularly, the exchange differed very considerably.

This state of maladministration affects the poorer classes, for the copper currency forms their entire fortune. On coming to the throne the present Shah, with praiseworthy thoughtfulness, endeavoured to put a stop to this cause of misery in his people, and ordered the Government to withdraw some 720,000 tomans' worth of copper coins at 25 to 30 shais per kran. This had a good effect, and although much of the depreciated coin is still in circulation, particularly in out-of-the-way places, its circulation in the larger towns has been considerably diminished.

Lately the Government has adopted the measure of supplying the public with nickel coins, one-shai and two-shai pieces, which, although looked at askance at first, are now found very handy by the natives and circulate freely, principally in Resht, Kasvin, Teheran and

Isfahan. In other cities I did not see any, nor would the natives accept mine in payment, and in villages no one would have anything to do with them as they were absolutely unknown. But wherever it has been possible to commence the circulation of these nickel coins—which were struck at the Brussels Mint and which are quite pretty—they have been accepted with great pleasure.

The old gold coins in circulation in Persia—very few and far apart—were the toman, half-toman, and two-kran piece. The gold had a legal fineness of 990. The legal weight in grains troy was : toman, 53·28 ; half-toman, 26·64 ; two-kran piece, 10·656. Weight in pure gold ; toman, 51·7572 ; half-toman, 26·3736 ; two-kran piece, 10·54944.

The new coins are the two-tomans, one-toman (differentiated in 1879 and subsequent to 1879), half-toman and two-kran pieces, the gold having a legal fineness of 900. Legal weight :—

	Two tomans.	One toman		Half toman.	Two kran piece.
		1879.	Subsequent to 1879.		
Grains troy	100·64	50·32	44·40	22·20	8·88
Weight in pure gold .	90 576	45·288	39·96	19·98	7·992

The new silver coinage consists of 2-kran pieces (five of which make a toman), one-kran, half-kran, and quarter-kran, all keeping to the legal fineness of 900 as in the older coins struck from 1857 to 1878 :—

	Two krans.	One kran.	Half kran.	Quarter kran.
Legal weight (grains troy) .	142·08	71·04	30·52	15·26
Weight in grains silver . .	127·872	63·936	27·468	13·734

The 1857 to 1878 coins were merely one-kran, half-kran, quarter-kran :—

	One kran.	Half kran.	Quarter kran.
Legal weight	76·96	38 48	19·24
Weight in pure silver	69·264	34 632	17·316

The older coinage before 1857, a most irregular coin—of one kran—varied considerably and had an approximate average fineness of 855, an average weight (grains troy) of 75·88, and a weight in pure silver of grains troy 64·877, which is below the correct standard by no less than 6·76 per cent.

In the newest coinage of two-kran pieces, the coin most used in cities,—large payments being always made in two-kran pieces—we have an average fineness of 892·166 ; average weight, grains troy, 149·771 ; weight in pure silver, grains troy, 124·69, or 2·55 per cent. below the standard.

In nickel coinage, composed of 25 per cent. or nickel and 75 per cent. of copper, we have :—

Two shai pieces (grains troy)	69·45
One shai pieces (grains troy)	46·30

The copper coins are in great variety. There is the *abassi* (one-fifth of a kran) worth four shais, and very scarce now.

The *sadnar* (one-tenth of a kran) equivalent to two shais.

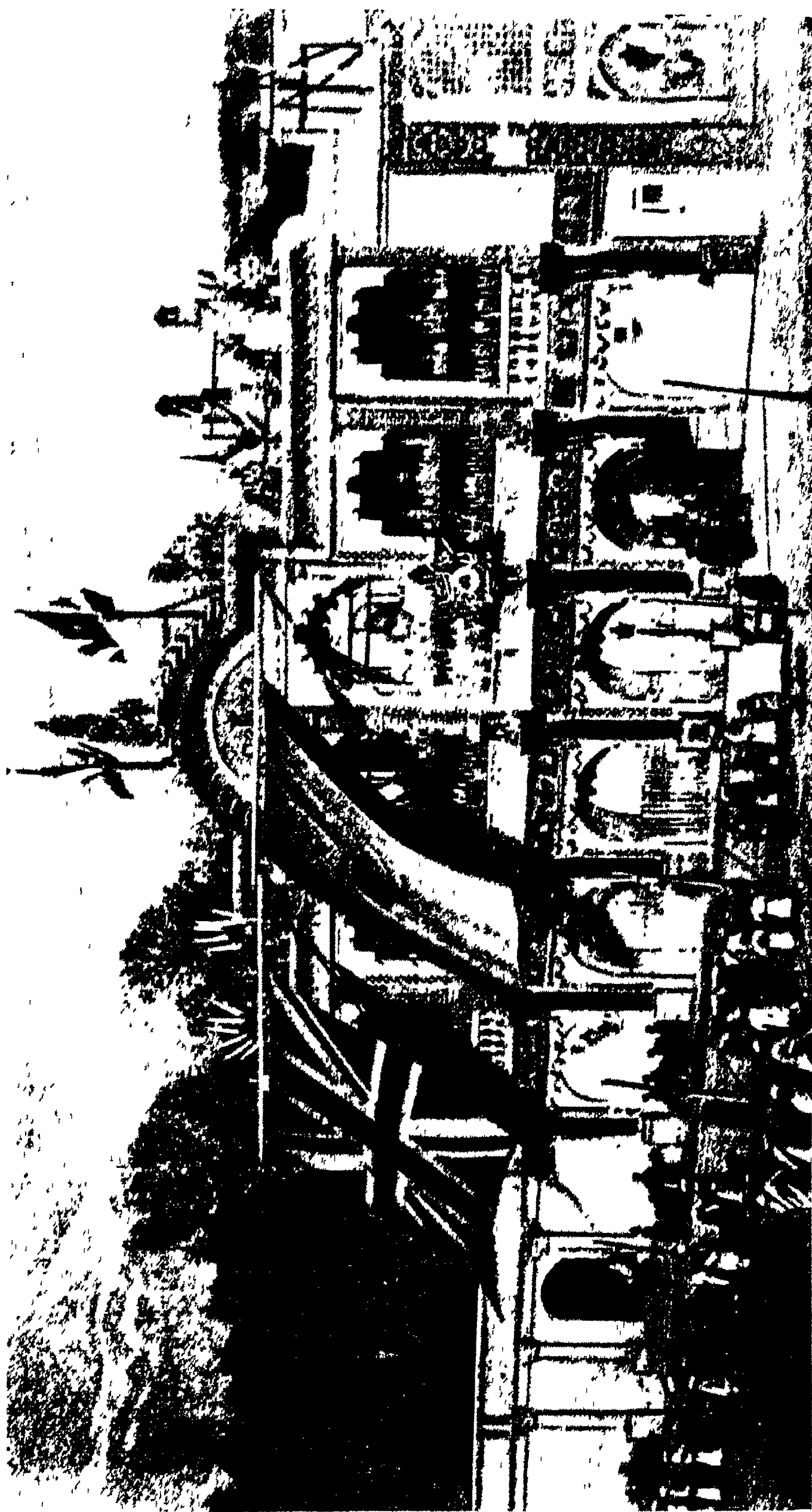
The (one) *shai* (one-twentieth of a kran).

The *pul* (one-fortieth of a kran), half a shai.

And the *jendek* (one-eightieth of a kran) a quarter shai ; this coin only found in circulation in Khorassan.

When it is remembered that at the present rate of exchange the kran can be reckoned at fivepence in English money, and the toman as roughly equivalent to one American dollar, it will be seen that the subdivisions of the kran are rather minute for the average European mind.

Yet there are things that one can buy even for a *jendek*; think of it,—the fourth part of a farthing! But that is only in Khorassan.



THE IMPERIAL BANK OF PERSIA DECORATED ON THE SHAH'S BIRTHDAY.

CHAPTER XIV

The Banks of Persia—The Imperial Bank of Persia—The most revered foreigner in Persia—Loans—The road concession—The action of the Stock Exchange injurious to British interests—Securities—Brains and not capital—Risks of importing capital—An ideal banking situation—Hoarding—Defective communication—The key to profitable banking in Persia—How the exchange is affected—Coins—Free trade—The Russian Bank and Mr. De Witte—Mr. Grube an able Manager—Healthy competition—Support of the Russian Government.

THE Banks of Persia can be divided into three classes. One, containing the smaller native bankers, who often combine the jeweller's business with that of the money changer ; the larger and purely native banking businesses, and then the foreign banks, such as the Imperial Bank of Persia (English Bank), the Banque d'Escompte et de Prêts (Russian Bank) and the Agency of the Banque Internationale de Commerce de Moscow (Banque Poliakoff). There are other foreign firms too, such as Ziegler and Co., Hotz, the Persian Gulf Trading Co., etc., which transact banking to a limited extent besides their usual and principal trading business ; but these are not banks proper.

The Imperial Bank of Persia, being a purely

British enterprise, is the most interesting to us. Its main offices are in a most impressive building in the principal square of Teheran, and it has branch offices at Tabriz, Isfahan, Meshed, Yezd, Shiraz, in the Teheran Bazaar, at Bushire and Kermanshah. It would be useless to go into the various vicissitudes through which the Bank has passed since it was first started, and the difficulties which it encountered in meeting the unusual ways of doing business of Persians and satisfying the desires of directors and shareholders in simple London town. One thing is, nevertheless, certain, and that is that if the Imperial Bank of Persia maintains the prestige now belonging to it, it owes this to Mr. Rabino, of Egyptian fame, the Manager of the Bank,—without exception the most revered foreigner in Persia.

I will not touch on the sore question of the Persian loans, eventually secured by Russia, but, curiously enough, the capital of the first loan, at least, was in great measure practically transferred from Russia to Persia by the Imperial Bank, which had the greatest stock of money in Teheran; nor shall I go into the successful and unsuccessful ventures of the Bank, such as the Road Concession, and the Mining Corporation. As to the road concession, it is beyond doubt that had the Bank not become alarmed, and had they held on a little longer, the venture might have eventually paid, and paid well. But naturally, in a slow country like Persia, nothing can be a financial success unless it is given time to develop properly.

With regard to its relation with the Banque d'Escompte et de Prêts, the Russian Bank—believed by some to be a dangerous rival—matters may to my mind be seen in two aspects. I believe that the Russian Bank, far from damaging the Imperial Bank, has really been a godsend to it, as it has relieved it by sharing advances to the Government which in time might have proved somewhat of a burden on one establishment. It is a mistake, too, to believe that in a country like Persia there is not room for two large concerns like the two above-mentioned Banks, and that one or the other is bound to go.

The rumoured enormous successes of the Russian Bank and its really fast-increasing prestige are indisputable, but the secret of these things is well known to the local management of the Imperial Bank, which could easily follow suit and quickly surpass the Russians if more official and political support were forthcoming.

The action of the London Stock Exchange in depreciating everything Persian, for the sake of reprisal, is also injurious to the Bank, and more so to the prestige of this country, though we do not seem to see that our attitude has done much more harm to ourselves than to the Persians. It is true that Persia is a maladministered country, that there is corruption, that there is intrigue, and so forth, but is there any other country, may I ask, where to a greater or smaller extent the same accusation could not be made? Nor can we get away from the fact that although

Persia has been discredited on the London market it is one of the few countries in which the national debt is extremely small and can easily be met.

The obligations of the Imperial Government and of Muzaffer-ed-din Shah's signature, have never failed to be met, nor has the payment of full interest on mortgages contracted ever been withheld. Delays may have occurred, but everything has come right in the end. Our absurd attitude towards the Persians, when we are at the same time ready to back up enterprises that certainly do not afford one-tenth of the security to be found in Persia, is therefore rather difficult to understand.

There are few countries in which so much can be done with a comparatively small outlay as in Persia. It is not enterprises on a gigantic scale, nor millions of pounds sterling that are needed ; moderate sums handled with judgment, knowledge and patient perseverance, would produce unlooked-for results. Large imported sums of capital in hard cash are not wanted and would involve considerable risk. First of all, stands the danger of the depreciation of capital by the fall in silver and the gradual rise in exchange due to the excess of imports over exports. Then comes the narrowness of the Persian markets which renders the return of large sums in cash an extremely long and difficult operation ; and last but not least, the serious fact that capital is generally imported at a loss, inasmuch as the intrinsic value of the kran is much below its exchange value.

The ideal situation of an English Bank trading with the East,¹ is when its capital remains in gold, whilst its operations are conducted in silver by means of its deposits. This, because of the instability in the price of silver as compared with that of gold, and the risks which follow upon holding a metal fluctuating in value almost daily. The situation in Persia, partly owing to the constant appreciation of the Persian currency, due to the great dearth of silver produced by hoarding as well as by the export of coin to Central Asia, is quite suitable to the system of banking indicated above.

The difference between the intrinsic and the exchange value of the kran, notwithstanding the constant demand for exchange, is quite worthy of note. Political preoccupation is the principal cause of the hoarding system in Government circles, and in the masses the absence of banking organisations in which the natives have sufficient confidence to deposit their savings. Slowly but surely the Persian is beginning to feel the good effects of depositing his money in a European-managed Bank offering sound guarantees, and it is certain that in time all the money required for trade purposes will be found in Persia itself.

When better communication between the various commercial centres has been established, the distribution of the funds as required, now a matter of great difficulty and risk, will be greatly facilitated. When the despatching of sums from one city to another instead of taking minutes by

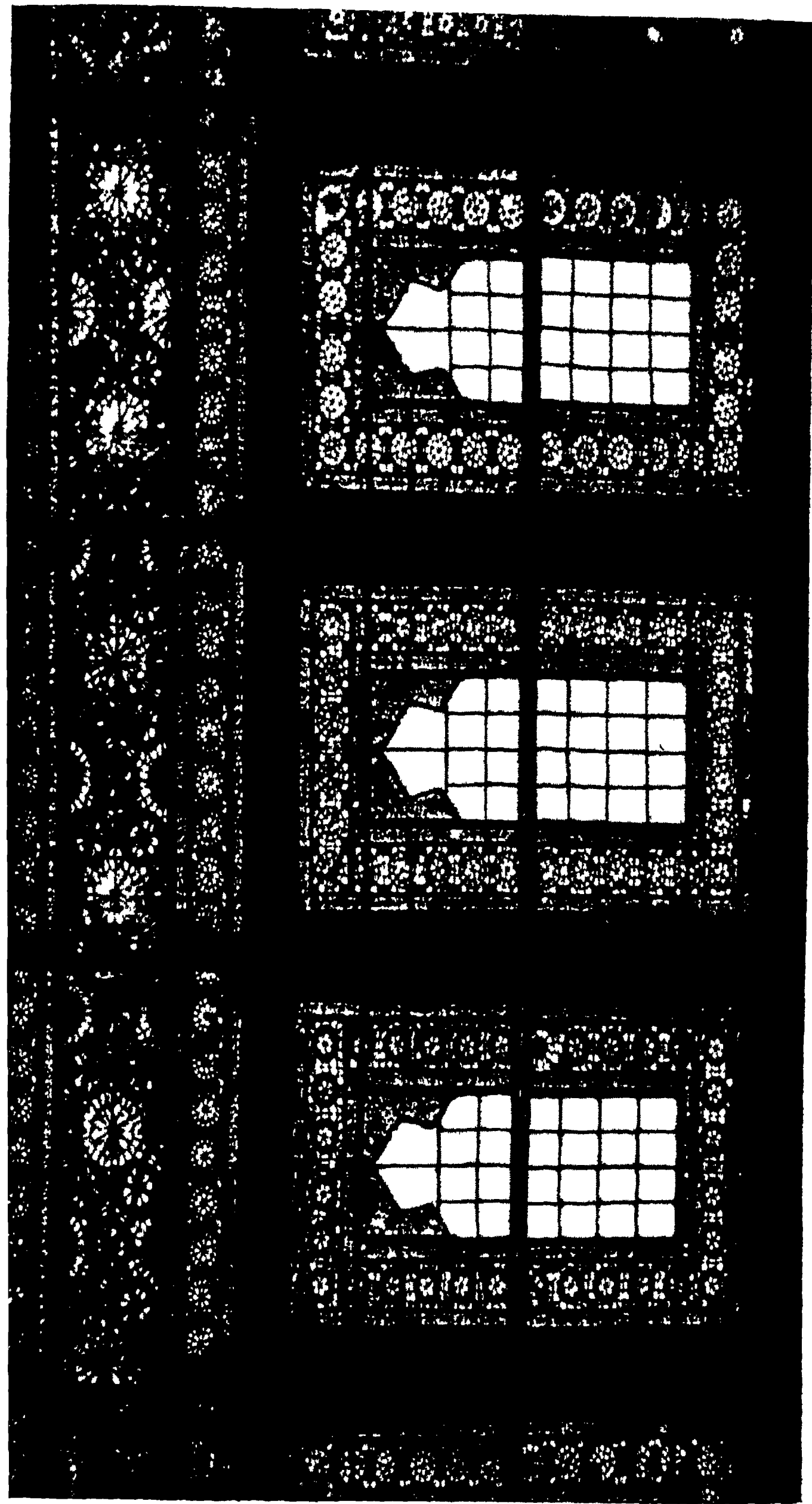
¹ See Institute of Bankers.

telegraph or hours by post occupy, under normal circumstances, days, weeks, a month or even more, because the payments are made in solid silver which has to travel by caravan, it is easy to understand how the dangerous system of hoarding comes to be practised with impunity and facility all over Persia.

Of course every precaution is taken to foresee abnormal scarcity of funds, by sending specie to the places threatened, in order to help trade. During the summer months, for instance, most of the floating capital is absorbed in the provinces by the opium crop in the Yezd and Isfahan markets, when the silver krans find their way *en masse* to the villages, much to the inconvenience of the two cities. In the autumn a similar occurrence hampers trade during the export season of dried fruit and silk from Azerbaijan and Ghilan, the exchange falling very low owing to scarcity of money.

A very important item in the Bank's transactions in Persia is the constant demand for remittances of revenue to Teheran for Government purposes, such as payments for the army, officials, etc., and these remittances amount to very large sums.

The key to profitable banking in Persia is the arbitration of foreign exchanges, which being so intimately connected with internal exchange allows the latter to be worked at a profit, advantage being taken of breaks in the level of prices; but of course, with the introduction of telegraphs and in future of railways, these



A TYPICAL PERSIAN WINDOW. (Mi Rabino's House, Teheran.)

profits will become more and more difficult to make. In Persia the lack of quick communication still affords a fair chance of good remuneration without speculation for the important services rendered by a bank to trade.

The exchange of Persia upon London is specially affected by two influences. In the north by the value of the ruble, the more important and constant factor, Tabriz, the Persian centre of the Russian exchange, being the nearest approach in Persia to a regular market ; and in the south by the rupee exchange, which differs from the ruble in its being dependent upon the price of silver.

In a country like Persia, where the exchange is not always obtainable and money at times is not to be procured, it is easy to conceive the difficulty of a bank. Forecasts of movements, based on general causes, are of little or no value in Persia. To this must be added the difficulties of examining and counting coins—weighing is not practicable owing to the irregularity of each coin—of the transmission of funds to distant places, and the general ignorance except in mercantile circles—of banking methods as we understand them.

The Imperial Bank is established in Persia, not as is believed by some persons to do business for England and English people, but to do business with everybody. “The spirit of free trade alone,” said Mr. Rabino to me, “must animate the management of such a bank. Its services must be at the disposal of all ; its impartiality to

English, Russian, Austrian, Persian, or whatever nationality a customer may belong to, unquestioned. All must have a fair and generous treatment." The interests of the Imperial Bank are firstly those of its shareholders, secondly those of Persia which gives the Bank hospitality.

The Bank has already rendered inestimable services to Persia by diffusing sound business principles, which the Persians seem slowly but gladly to learn and accept. That the future of a bank on such true principles is bound to be crowned with success seems a certainty, but as has often been pointed out, it would be idle to fancy that a couple of years or three will remove the prejudices and peculiar ways of thinking and of transacting business of an Oriental race, whose civilisation is so different from ours, or that the natives will accept our financial system with its exactitude and punctuality, the result of ages of experience, unhesitatingly and immediately.

The Persian requires very careful handling. He is obstinate, and by mere long, tedious, passive resistance will often get the better in a bargain. By the employment of similar methods however, it is not difficult to obtain one's way in the end. A good deal of patience is required and time *ad libitum*, that is all.

There is no need for a large stock of gold and rubles, but what is mostly wanted is a greater number of men who might be sent all over the country, men with good business heads and a polite manner, and, above all, men well

suited to the present requirements of the country.

The Russian, we find,—contrary to our popular ideas, which ever depict him knut in hand,—almost fraternises with the Asiatics, and in any case treats them with due consideration as if they had a right to live, at least in their own country. Hence his undoubted popularity. But we, the quintessence of Christianity and charity towards our neighbours, habitually treat natives with much needless harshness and reserve, which far from impressing the natives with our dignity—as we think—renders us ridiculous in their eyes. A number of younger Englishmen are beginning to be alive to this fact, and instruction on this point should form part of the commercial training of our youths whose lives are to be spent in the East.

The other important bank in Persia upon which great hopes are built, although worked on different lines, is the so-called Russian Bank, the *Société de Prêts de Perse*, as it was at first called when founded by Poliakoff in 1891. It was an experiment intended to discover exactly what was wanted in the country and what was the best way to attract business. The monopoly of Public Auctions was obtained in conjunction with the Mont-de-Piété—a scheme which did not work very well at first, the natives not being accustomed to sudden innovations. The concern subsequently developed into the *Bank Estekrasi* (Bank of Loans), or *Banque de Prêts de Perse*, as it styled itself, but financially it did not pay,

and at one moment was expected to liquidate. It is said that it then threatened to amalgamate with the Imperial Bank. Mr. De Witte, of St. Petersburg fame, was consulted in the matter, and took exactly twenty-four hours to make up his mind on what was the best course to pursue. He bought the bank up, the State Bank of St. Petersburg making an advance on the shares. The Minister of Finance has a right to name all the officials in the bank, who, for appearance sake, are not necessarily all of Russian nationality, and the business is transacted on the same lines as at the State Bank of St. Petersburg.

A most efficient man was sent out as manager ; Mr. Grube, a gentleman of much tact and most attractive manner, and—like Mr. Rabino—a genius in his way at finance ; a man with a thorough knowledge of the natives and their ways. In the short time he has been in Teheran the bank has made enormous strides, by mere sound, business capability and manly, straightforward enterprise.

Mr. Grube has, I think, the advantage of the manager of the Imperial Bank in the fact that, when the Russians know they have a good man at the helm, they let him steer his ship without interference. He is given absolute power to do what he thinks right, and is in no way hampered by shareholders at home. This freedom naturally gives him a very notable advantage over the Imperial Bank, which always has to wait for instructions from London.

Mr. Grube, with whom I had a long and

most interesting conversation, told me how he spends his days in the bazaar branch of his bank, where he studies the ways and future possibilities of the country and its natives, and the best ways of transacting business compatible with European principles, and in particular carefully analysing the best ways of pushing Russian trade and industries in Persia. In all this he has the absolute confidence and help of his Government, and it is really marvellous how much he has been able to do to further Russian influence in Persia. There is no trickery, no intrigue, no humbug about it ; but it is mere frank, open competition in which the stronger nation will come out first.

It was most gratifying to hear in what glowing terms of respect the managers of the two rival banks spoke of each other. They were fighting a financial duel, bravely, fairly, and in a most gentlemanly manner on both sides. There was not the slightest shade of false play on either side, and this I specially mention because of the absurd articles which one often sees in English papers, written by hasty or ill-informed correspondents.

Russia's trade, owing to its convenient geographical position, is bound to beat the English in Northern Persia, but it should be a good lesson to us to see, nevertheless, how the Russian Government comes forward for the protection of the trade of the country, and does everything in its power to further it. Russia will even go so far as to sell rubles at a loss to merchants in order to encourage trade in Persia, no doubt with

the certainty in sight that as trade develops the apparent temporary loss will amply be compensated in due time by big profits.

It is, to an Englishman, quite an eye-opener to watch how far the Russians will go for the absolute benefit of their own trade, and this conduct pursued openly and blamelessly can only be admired by any fair-minded person. It is only a pity that we are not yet wide awake enough to do the same.

The Russian Bank has branches in the principal cities of Northern Persia, her business being so far merely confined to the North.

CHAPTER XV

Illegitimate Bank-notes—Hampering the Bank's work—The grand fiasco of the Tobacco Corporation—Magnificent behaviour of the natives—The Mullahs and tobacco—The nation gives up smoking—Suppression of the monopoly—Compensation—Want of tact—Important European commercial houses and their work—Russian and British trade—Trade routes—The new Persian Customs—What they are represented to be and what they are—Duties—The employment of foreigners in Persia—The Maclean incident.

THE work of the Imperial Bank has at various times been hampered by speculators who tried to make money by misleading the public. Their speculations were always based on the prestige of the bank. For instance, take the Bushire Company and the Fars Trading Company, Limited, companies started by native merchants. They illegally issued bank-notes which, strangely enough, owing to the security found in the Imperial bank-notes, found no difficulty in circulating at a small discount, especially in Shiraz.

Naturally, the Imperial Bank, having in its conventions with the Persian Government the exclusive right to issue bank-notes payable at sight, protested against this infringement of

rights, but for a long time got little redress, and some of the fraudulent bank-notes are to this day circulating in Southern Persia.

Sooner or later this was bound to interfere with the bank, as the natives, unaccustomed to bank-notes, confused the ones with the others. Moreover, the enemies of the bank took advantage of this confusion to instigate the people against the Imperial Bank, making them believe that the word "Imperial" on the bank-notes meant that the issuing of bank-notes was only a new scheme of the Government to supply people with worthless paper instead of a currency of sound silver cash. In the southern provinces this stupid belief spread very rapidly, and was necessarily accentuated by the issue of the illegal bank-notes of local private concerns, which, although bearing foreign names, were merely Persian undertakings.

Necessarily, the many foreign speculations to which we have already referred, cannot be said to have strengthened confidence in anything of European importation ; but the grand successive abortions of the Belgian and Russian factories—which were to make gas, sugar, glass, matches, etc.—are hardly to be compared in their disastrous results to the magnificent English fiasco of the Tobacco Corporation, which not only came to grief itself, but nearly caused a revolution in the country. It is well-known how a concession was obtained by British capitalists in 1890 to establish a tobacco monopoly in Persia, which involved the usual payment of a

large sum to the Shah, and presents to high officials.

The company made a start on a very grand scale in February, 1891, having the whole monopoly of purchase and sale of tobacco all over Persia. No sooner had it begun its work than a commission of injured native merchants presented a petition to the Shah to protest against it. A decree was, however, published establishing the monopoly of the corporation all over Persia, and upon this the discontent and signs of rebellion began.

Yet this affair of the tobacco monopoly showed what fine, dignified people the Persians can be if they choose. The want of tact, the absolute mismanagement and the lack of knowledge in dealing with the natives, the ridiculous notion that coercion would at once force the Persians to accept the tobacco supplied by the Corporation, fast collected a dense cloud of danger overhead. Teheran and the other larger cities were placarded with proclamations instigating the crowds to murder Europeans and do away with their work.

But the Persians, notwithstanding their threats, showed themselves patient, and confident that the Shah would restore the nation to its former happiness. In the meantime the company's agents played the devil all over the empire. It seems incredible, even in the annals of Persian history, that so little lack of judgment could have been shown towards the natives.

The Mullahs saw an excellent opportunity to

undo in a few days the work of Europeans of several scores of years. "Allah," they preached to the people, "forbids you to smoke or touch the impure tobacco sold you by Europeans." On a given day the Mugte halh, or high priest of sacred Kerbalah, declared that the faithful throughout the country must touch tobacco no more; tobacco, the most cherished of Persian indulgences.

Mirza Hassan Ashtiani, *mujtehed* of Teheran, on whom the Shah relied to pacify the crowds now in flagrant rebellion, openly preached against his Sovereign and stood by the veto of his superior priest at Kerbalah. He went further and exhorted the people to cease smoking, not because tobacco was impure, but because the Koran says that it is unlawful to make use of any article which is not fairly dealt in by all alike.

At a given date all through the Shah's dominions—and this shows a good deal of determination—the foreigner and his tobacco were to be treated with contempt. Tobacco was given up by all. In the bazaars, in the caravanserais, in the streets, in the houses, where under ordinary circumstances every man puffed away at a *kalian*, a *chibuk* (small pocket-pipe) or cigarette, not a single soul could be seen smoking for days and days. Only the Shah made a point of smoking in public to encourage the people, but even his wife and concubines—at the risk of incurring disfavour—refused to smoke, and smashed the *kalias* before his eyes. In households where the men—ever weaker than women

—could, after weeks of abstinence, not resist the temptation in secrecy, their wives destroyed the pipes.

For several weeks not a single individual touched tobacco—a most dignified protest which quite terrified the Shah and everybody, for, indeed, it was apparent that people so strong-willed were not to be trifled with.

In many places the natives broke out into rebellion, and many lives were lost. Nasr-ed-din Shah, frightened and perplexed, called the high Mullah of Teheran to the palace (January 5th-6th, 1892). By his advice the tobacco monopoly was there and then abolished by an Imperial Decree, and the privileges granted for the sale and export of tobacco revoked. Furthermore, the Mullah only undertook to pacify the people on condition that all foreign enterprises and innovations in Persia should be suppressed; that all people imprisoned during the riots should be freed, and the families of those killed fully indemnified.

The sudden end of the Tobacco Corporation necessarily led to much correspondence with the British Minister, Sir Frank Lascelles, on the question of compensation and damages to the company which, depending on its monopoly, had entered into agreements, and had already paid out large sums of money. It was finally agreed that the Shah should pay £500,000 sterling compensation, and take over the assets of the company, supposed to be some £140,000, subject to realisation.

With the assistance of the Bank of Persia, a six per cent. loan was issued, which was taken up principally by the shareholders of the Tobacco Corporation. The interest and the sinking fund of this loan were punctually met until the year 1900 when it was repaid in full on the conclusion of the Russian loan.

In England this failure seems to have been ascribed to Russian intrigue, but it must in all fairness be said that had the Russians tried a similar scheme in a similar manner, they would have fared even worse than we did. Even Persian concerns established on European principles have serious troubles to contend with ; but it was madness to believe that an entire Eastern nation could, at a moment's notice, be forced to accept—in a way most offensive to them—such an article of primary use as tobacco, which, furthermore, was offered at a higher price than their own tobaccos which they liked better.

There are in Persia a few important European commercial houses, such as Ziegler and Co., and Hotz and Son, which have extensive dealings with Persians. Ziegler and Co. deal in English imports and in the exportation of carpets, etc., whereas Hotz and Son import Russian articles, which they find cheaper and of easier sale. Both are eminently respectable firms, and enjoy the esteem of everybody.

Notwithstanding the Swiss name, Ziegler and Co. is an English firm, although, as far as I know, it has not a single English employee in its various branches in Persia. The reason, as we

have seen, is that foreigners are considered more capable. It has in the various cities some very able Swiss agents, who work most sensibly and excellently, and who certainly manage to make the best of whatever business there is to be done in the country. For over thirty years the house has been established in Persia, having begun its life at Tabriz and then extended to Teheran, Resht, Meshed, Isfahan, Yezd—the latter so far a non-important branch—and Shiraz, Bushire, Bandar Abbas and Bagdad, where it has correspondents working for the firm.

The house imports large quantities of Manchester goods and exports chiefly carpets, cloths, opium and dried fruit. The carpets, which are specially made for the European market, are manufactured chiefly at Sultanabad where thousands of hands are employed at the looms, scattered about in private houses of the people and not in a large factory. The firm takes special care to furnish good wool and cottons coloured with vegetable dyes, and not with aniline. Ancient patterns are selected and copied in preference to new designs. Of course, besides these, other carpets are purchased in other parts of the country. Carpets may be divided into three classes. The scarce and most expensive pure silk rugs ; the *lamsavieh* or good quality carpets, and the *mojodeh* or cheaper kind. There is a good demand for the two latter qualities all over Europe and in America.

Articles specially dealt in are the cotton and

wool fabrics called *ghilim*, the designs of which are most artistic ; and to a certain extent other fabrics, such as the vividly coloured Kashan velvets, the watered silks of Resht, the Kerman cloths resembling those of Cashmir, the silver and gold embroidered brocades of Yezd, and the silk handkerchiefs manufactured in the various silk districts, principally Tabriz, Resht, Kashan and Yezd.

The stamped and hand-drawn *kalamkars* in stringent colours upon white cotton also find their way in large quantities to Europe, but are more quaint than beautiful. Large and ill-proportioned figures are frequently attempted in these designs. When of truly Persian manufacture the colours are said to be quite permanent under the action of both light and water.

The firm of Hotz and Son deals in well-nigh everything, and has made good headway of late years. It has large establishments at Isfahan, Shiraz and Bushire, and two agencies, one at Ahwaz on the Karun River, and one in Teheran (Groeneweg, Dunlop, and Co.) ; while it has correspondents in Bagdad, Busrah, Hongkong and Rotterdam, the head offices being in London. Its carpet manufacturing business in Sultanabad is now carried on by the Persian Manufacturing Co. The exports are similar to those of Ziegler and Co.

There are also smaller firms, particularly in Teheran, such as the Toko, Virion, and others who do a retail business in piece goods and articles of any kind, and are entirely in the hands

of foreigners, Belgians, Austrians, and French. Without reference to statistics, which are absolutely worthless in a country like Persia, the yearly foreign trade of Persia, divided between the Gulf ports and the north and north-western and south-western frontiers, may be put down roughly at some nine or ten millions sterling.

The Russian trade in the north may be considered as about equal to the British in the south. Then there are the goods brought by the Trebizonde-Tabriz trade route from Turkey and the Mediterranean, and by the Bagdad-Kermanshah, another very important route.

The extravagant system of farming prevailing until quite lately in Persia, as well as the uncertainties of Customs and revenue returns, makes it difficult to give trustworthy figures; but in future, probably this year, we may expect some more reliable data from the new Belgian customs office, a really sensible and well-managed administration organised by Monsieur Naus, who is, indeed, to be congratulated on the success with which his efforts at bringing about so radical a reform in the system of collecting duties have in so short a time been crowned. We often hear in England that the Customs of Persia are absolutely in the hands of Russia, and are worked by Russian officials. Even serious papers like *The Times* publish misleading statements of this kind, but nothing could be more erroneous. M. Naus, at the head of the Customs, is a Belgian, and so are nearly all the foreign employees (there are one or two French, I believe) in Persian employ, but

not a single Russian is to be found among their number. That the Russians hold a comparatively trifling mortgage on the Customs as a security for their loan is true, but, as long as Persia is able to pay interest on it, Russia has no more power over the Persian Customs than we have. Under regular and honest management, like the present, the Customs have already given considerable results, and were it not for the weakness of the Government in the provinces, the Customs receipts might easily be doubled, even without a change in the tariff.

The duties levied in Persia are determined by the treaty of Turkmantchai with Russia in 1828, by which a uniform and reciprocal five per cent. for import and export was agreed to, a special convention, nevertheless, applying to Turkey, which fixed a reciprocal 12 per cent. export and 6 per cent. import duty, and 75 per cent. on tobacco and salt. An attempt was made to negotiate a new commercial treaty with Russia last year, but unfortunately, matters did not go as was expected by M. Naus, who was very keen on the subject. A high Russian official was despatched to Teheran who caused a good deal of trouble, and eventually the whole matter fell through.

Regarding the employment of foreigners by the Persian Government, it is not out of place to recall the Maclean incident.

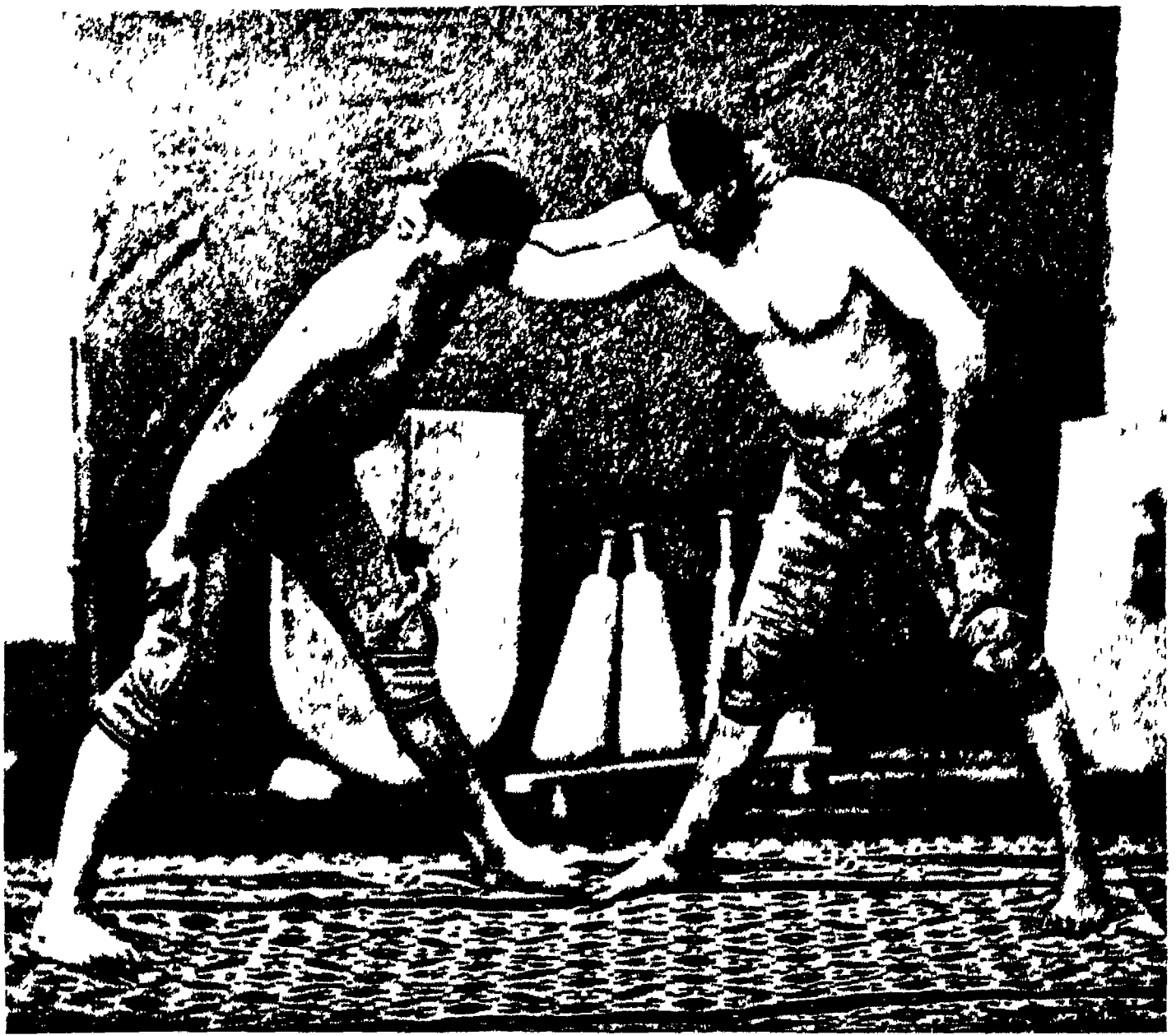
An agreement had been entered into with Mr. Maclean, a British subject, and a former employee of the Imperial Bank, to take charge

of the Mint, in order to bring it up to date and work it on more business-like principles than at present. This led to a demand from the Russians that a similarly high office in the Shah's Government should be given to a Russian, so that this appointment might not be taken as a slight against Russia; or, if this were not possible, that two or three Russians might be employed instead in minor capacities in the new Customs. The Persian Government would not agree to this, but owing to the pressure that had been brought to bear by the Russians they felt obliged to dismiss Mr. Maclean. The British minister necessarily then stood up for British rights, and a great scandal was made of the whole affair, and as an agreement for three years had been signed, the Persian Government had to pay the salary in full for that period, although they had only availed themselves of Mr. Maclean's services for a few months.

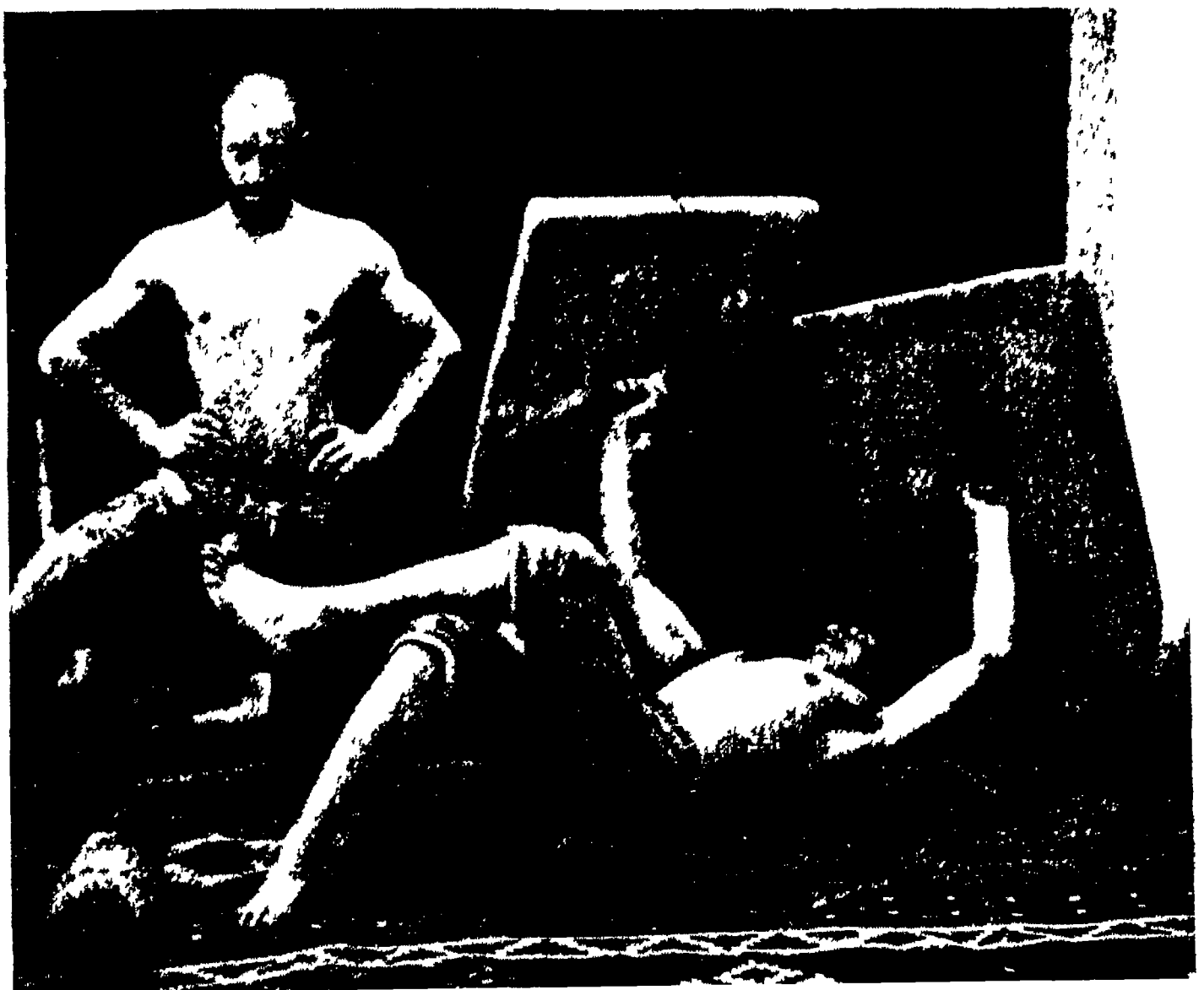
It is to be regretted that the Sadrazam acted in so reckless a manner, for the whole matter might have been settled quietly without the slightest disturbance and unpleasantness. Anyhow, this led to a decree being passed (in 1901) that in future *no British subject, no Russian, and no Turk* will be accepted in Persian employ. This includes the army, with the exception of the special Cossack regiment which had previously been formed under Russian instructors. It can safely be said that there is not a single Russian in any civil appointment in Persia, no more than there is any Britisher; but, in the Customs

service particularly, M. Naus being a Belgian, nearly all the employees are Belgian, as I have said, with only one or two French lower subordinates.

The Customs service is carried on with great fairness to all alike, and the mischievous stories of Russian preference and of the violation of rules in favour of Russian goods are too ridiculous to be taken into consideration. One fact is certain, that any one who takes the trouble to ascertain facts finds them very different from what they are represented to be by hasty and over-excited writers.



THE FIRST POSITION IN PERSIAN WRESTLING.



CHAPTER XVI

Russia on the brain—The apprehended invasion of India—Absolute nonsense—Russia's tariff—In the House of Commons—A friendly understanding advisable—German competition—The peace of the world—Russia's firm policy of bold advance—An outlet in the Persian Gulf—The policy of drift—Sound knowledge of foreign countries needed—Mutual advantages of a Russian and British agreement—Civilisation—Persia's integrity.

THERE is, unfortunately, a class of Englishmen—especially in India—who have Russia on the brain, and those people see the Russian everywhere and in everything. Every humble globe-trotter in India must be a Russian spy—even though he be an Englishman—and much is talked about a Russian invasion of India, through Tibet, through Afghanistan, Persia or Beluchistan.

To any one happening to know these countries it is almost heartrending to hear such nonsense, and worse still to see it repeated in serious papers, which reproduce and comment upon it gravely for the benefit of the public.

In explanation, and without going into many details, I will only mention the fact that it is more difficult than it sounds for armies—even

for the sturdy Russian soldier—to march hundreds of miles across deserts without water for men and animals, or over a high plateau like Tibet, where (although suggested by the wise newspaper Englishman at home as a sanatorium for British troops in India) the terrific climate, great altitudes, lack of fuel, and a few other such trifles would reduce even the largest European army into a very humble one at the end of a journey across it.

Then people seem to be ignorant of the fact that, with a mountainous natural frontier like the Himahlyas, a Maxim gun or two above each of the few passable passes would bring to reason any army—allowing that it could get thus far—that intended to cross over into India !

But, besides, have we not got soldiers to defend India ? Why should we fear the Russians ? Are we not as good as they are ? Why should we ever encourage the so far unconcerned Russian to come to India by showing our fear ? It is neither manly nor has it any sense in it. The Russian has no designs whatever upon India at present—he does not even dream of advancing on India—but should India eventually fall into Russia's hands—which is not probable—believe me, it will never be by a Russian army marching into India from the north, or north-west, or west. The danger, if there is any, may be found probably very much nearer home, in our own ignorance and blindness.

We also hear much about the infamy of Russia in placing a tariff on all goods in transit

for Persia, and we are told that this is another blow directed at English trade. Such is not the case. Russia, I am told by people who ought to know, would be only too glad to come to an understanding with England on some sensible basis, but she certainly is not quite so unwise as we are in letting Germany, her real enemy, swamp her market with cheap goods. The tariff is chiefly a protection against Germany. Of course, if we choose to help Germany to ruin Russia's markets as well as our own, then we must suffer in consequence, but looking ahead towards the future of Asia, it might possibly not be unwise to come to some sensible arrangement with Russia, by which her commercial interests and ours would mutually benefit instead of suffering as they do at present.

In Persia we are playing a rapidly losing game. Commercially, as I have already said, we have lost Northern Persia, and Russian influence is fast advancing in Southern Persia. This is surely the time to pull up and change our tactics, or we shall go to the wall altogether.

As Mr. Joseph Walton, M.P., very ably put it before the House of Commons on January 22nd, 1902, in the case of Russia we have at present to contend with abnormal conditions of competition. It would therefore be wise for the British Government to reconsider its policy in order to maintain, at least, our commercial interests in Southern Persia. The Government of India, too, should take its share in upholding British interests—being directly concerned in

affairs that regard the welfare of Persia. Russia has gone to great expense to construct two excellent roads from the north into Persia to facilitate Russian commerce, and it would be advisable if we were to do the same from the south. (One of the roads, the Piri Bazaar—Kasvin Road, is said to have cost, including purchase of the Kasvin Teheran section, something like half a million sterling). It is indeed idle, as Mr. Walton said, to adhere to methods of the past when foreign Governments are adopting modern methods in order to achieve the commercial conquest of new regions.

The matter of establishing Consulates, too, is of the greatest importance. We find even large trading cities like Kermanshah, Yezd, Shiraz and Birjand devoid of British Consuls. Undoubtedly we should wish a priority of right to construct roads and railways in Southern Persia—in the event of the Persians failing to construct these themselves—to be recognised, and it seems quite sensible and fair to let Persia give a similar advantage to Russia in Northern Persia. Nothing but a friendly understanding between England and Russia, which should clearly define the respective spheres of influence, will save the integrity of Persia. That country should remain an independent buffer state between Russia and India. But to bring about this result it is more than necessary that we should support Persia on our side, as much as Russia does on hers, or the balance is bound to go in the latter's favour.

The understanding with Russia should also—and I firmly believe Russia would be only too anxious to acquiesce in this—provide a protection against German commercial invasion and enterprise in the region of the Persian Gulf. Germany—not Russia—is England's bitterest enemy—all the more to be dreaded because she is a "friendly enemy." It is no use to try and keep out Russia merely to let Germany reap any commercial advantages that may be got—and that is the policy England is following at the present moment. The question whether or no we have a secret agreement with Germany, in connection with the Euphrates Valley Railway, is a serious one, because, although one cannot but admire German enterprise in that quarter, it would be well to support it only in places where it is not likely to be disastrous to our own trade and interests generally.

Little or no importance should be attached to the opinion of the Russian Press in their attacks upon England. The influential men of Russia, as well as the Emperor himself, are certainly anxious to come to a satisfactory understanding with England regarding affairs not only in Persia but in Asia generally. An understanding between the two greatest nations in the world would, as long as it lasted, certainly maintain the peace of the world, and would have enormous control over the smaller nations; whereas petty combinations can be of little practical solid assistance or use to us.

As I have pointed out before on several

occasions,¹ Russia is not to-day what she was half a century ago. She has developed enough to know her strength and power, and her soldiers are probably the finest in Europe—because the most practical and physically enduring. Her steady, firm policy of bold advance, in spite of our namby-pamby, ridiculous remonstrances, can but command the admiration of any fair-minded person, although we may feel sad, very sad, that we have no men capable of standing up against it, not with mere empty, pompous words, but with actual deeds which might delay or stop her progress. As matters are proceeding now, we are only forwarding Russia's dream of possessing a port in the Persian Gulf. She wants it and she will no doubt get it. In Chapters XXXIII and XXXIV the question of the point upon which her aims are directed is gone into more fully. The undoubted fact remains that, notwithstanding our constant howling and barking, she invariably gets what she wants, and even more, which would lead one to believe that, at any rate, her fear of us is not very great.

We are told that our aggressive—by which is meant retrogressive—policy towards Russia is due to our inability to effect an entire reversal of our policy towards that country, but this is not the case at all. At any rate, as times and circumstances have changed, our policy need not be altogether reversed, but it must necessarily be subjected to modifications in order to meet changed conditions. If we stand still while

¹ See *China and the Allies*, Heinemann ; Scribner.

Russia is going fast ahead, we are perforce left behind. The policy of drift, which we seem to favour, is bound to lead us to disaster, and when we couple with it inefficacious resistance and bigoted obstruction we cannot be surprised if, in the end, it only yields us bitter disappointment, extensive losses, enmity and derision.

The policy of drift is merely caused by our absolute ignorance of foreign countries. We drift simply because we do not know what else to do. We hear noble lords in the Government say that the reason we did not lend Persia the paltry two and a half millions sterling was because "men of business do not lend money except on proper security, and that before embarking on any such policy the Government must be anxious to see whether the security is both sufficient and suitable." Yes, certainly, but why did the Government not see? Had the Government seen they certainly would have effected the loan. Surely, well-known facts, already mentioned in previous pages, have proved very luminously our folly in taking the advice of incompetent men who judge of matters with which, to say the least, they are not familiar. But the real question appears to be, not how to make a safe and profitable financial investment, which is no part of the functions of the British or any other Government, but rather whether it is not better to lay out a certain sum for a valuable political object than to allow a formidable competitor to do so to our prejudice.

Hence the disadvantageous position in which

we find ourselves at present, all over Asia, but particularly in Persia. It would no doubt be the perfection of an agreement if an amicable understanding could be arrived at with Russia, not only regarding Persia but including China, Manchuria, and Corea as well. A frank and fair adjustment of Russian and British interests in these countries could be effected without serious difficulty, mutual concessions could advantageously be granted, and mutual advice and friendly support would lead to remarkably prosperous results for both countries.

Russia, notwithstanding all we hear of her, would only be too glad to make sacrifices and concessions in order to have the friendship and support of England, and Russia's friendship to England would, I think, be of very great assistance to British manufacturers. It must be remembered that Russia is an enormous country, and that her markets both for exports and imports are not to be despised. In machinery alone huge profits could be made, as well as in cloths, piece goods, fire-arms, Manchester goods, worked iron, steel, etc.

Articles of British manufacture are in much demand in Russia and Siberia, and, should the British manufacturer see his way to make articles as required by the buyer, very large profits could be made in the Russian market. Also huge profits will eventually be made by the export of Siberian products into England and the Continent, a branch of industry which the Russians themselves are attempting to push into

the British market with the assistance of their Government.

To return to Persia it must not be forgotten that British imports into that country (in 1900) amounted to £1,400,000, whilst Russia imported £21,974,952 of British goods. Which, after all, is the customer best worth cultivating : Persia which takes £1,400,000 of our goods, or Russia which buys from us for £21,974,952 ?

It is a mistake to believe that we are the only civilising agents of the world, and that the work of other powers in that direction only tends to the stagnation of Eastern peoples. One might affirm with more truth that our intercourse with the civilisation of the East tends to our own stagnation. We do impart to the natives, it is true, some smattering of the semi-barbaric, obsolete ways we possess ourselves, but standing aside and trying to look upon matters with the eye of a rational man, it is really difficult to say whether what we teach and how we teach it does really improve the Eastern people or not. Personally, with a long experience of natives all over Asia, it appears to me that it does not.

The Russian, though from a British point of view altogether a barbarian, does not appear to spoil the natives quite so much in his work among them. The natives under his *régime* seem happy, and his work of civilisation is more of the patriarchal style, tending more to enrich the people, to promote commerce and trade on appropriate lines, than to educate the

masses according to Western methods and laws. The results are most decidedly good, and anyhow lead to much greater contentment among the masses than we can secure, for instance, in India. Above all things it makes for peace; the natives are treated with extreme consideration and kindness, but at the same time they know that no nonsense is tolerated, and that is undoubtedly the way most appreciated by Asiatics.

In Persia, it is to be hoped for the peace of all that neither Russia nor England will acquire any territorial rights, but that the integrity of the Shah's Empire may long be preserved. Only it would not be unwise to prepare for emergencies in case the country—already half spoiled by European ways—should one day collapse and make interference necessary. The integrity of states in Asia intended to serve as buffers is all very well when such states can look after themselves, but with misgovernment and want of proper reform, as in Persia, great trouble may be expected sooner than we imagine, unless we on our side are prepared to help Persia as much as Russia does on her side.

If this can be done, with little trouble to ourselves, and in a way agreeable to the Persians, there is no reason why, as an independent state, Persia should not fully develop her resources, reorganise her government and army, become a powerful nation, and establish a flourishing trade, Russia and England profiting equally by the assistance given her.

CHAPTER XVII

Education—Educated but not instructed—The Mullahs—The Madrassahs—The Royal College in Teheran—Secular Schools—The brain of Persian students—Hints on commercial education for Englishmen—Languages a necessity—Observation—Foreigners and Englishmen—The Englishman as a linguist—Special commercial training in Germany—The British manufacturer—Ways and ways—Our Colonies swamped with foreign-made goods—Russia fast and firmly advancing.

To believe that the Persians are illiterate would be a mistake, and to think that the masses of Iran were properly educated would be a greater mistake still ; but, if I may be allowed the expression, the average Persian cannot be better described than by saying he is “educated in ignorance” ; or, in other words, the average Persian is educated, yes ; but instructed, no.

If what the people are taught can be called education—and we in England should not be the first to throw stones at others—the average Persian is better educated than the average European. But there is education and education. It is difficult to find the commonest man in Persian cities who cannot read to a certain extent, and most people can also write a little and have a smattering of arithmetic.

The teaching, except in the larger and principal centres, is almost entirely in the hands of the Mullahs, so that naturally, as in our clerical schools, religion is taught before all things, verses of the Koran are learnt by heart, and the various rites and multiple religious ceremonies are pounded into the children's brains, and accessory religious sanitary duties of ablutions, etc., which are believed to purify the body and bring it nearer to Allah, are inculcated. Even in remoter villages, the boys are taught these things in the Mosques as well as a little reading, and enough writing for daily uses and how to add and subtract and multiply figures. Famous bits of national poetry and further passages from the Koran are committed to memory.

In the large cities a higher education can be obtained in the elaborate Madrassahs adjoining the mosques, and here, too, entirely at the hands of the Mullahs; but these higher colleges, a kind of university, are only frequented by the richer and better people, by those who intend to devote themselves to medicine, to jurisprudence, or to theological studies. Literature and art and science, all based mostly on the everlasting Koran, are here taught *à fond*, the students spending many years in deep and serious study. These are the old-fashioned and more common schools. But new schools in European or semi-European style also exist and, considering all things, are really excellent.

In Teheran, a Royal College has been in existence for some years. It has first-class



IMAN JUMEI. Head Priest of Teheran, and Official Sayer of Prayers
to the Shah.

foreign teachers, besides native instructors educated in Europe, and supplies the highest instruction to the students. Modern languages are taught to perfection, the higher mathematics, international jurisprudence, chemistry, philosophy, military strategy, and I do not know what else! I understood from some of the professors that the students were remarkable for their quickness and intelligence as compared with Europeans, and I myself, on meeting some of the students who had been and others who were being instructed in the University, was very much struck by their facility in learning matters so foreign to them, and by their astounding faculty of retaining what they had learnt. It must be recollected that the various scientific lessons and lectures were delivered not in Persian, but in some foreign language, usually French, which intensified their difficulty of apprehending.

Other private schools have also been started on similar principles in various parts of the Empire. Even in Yezd a most excellent school on similar lines is to be found and will be described later on.

Naturally the Mullahs look askance upon these Government schools, in which foreign methods are adopted. The Alliance Française of Paris, which has a committee in Teheran, has opened a French school under the direction of Mr. Virioz, a certificated professor. The school has nearly 100 pupils, all natives. This is a primary school, of which the studies are in French, but a Mullah has been added to the

staff to teach the Koran and religious subjects. In Hamadan, a large Jewish centre, the Alliance Israelite has opened important schools which have largely drained the American Presbyterian schools of their Jewish pupils. Other secular schools, it appears, are to be opened in which foreign education is to be imparted, and no doubt this is a first and most excellent step of Persia towards the improvement, if not the actual reform, of the old country.

Not that the religious education received from the priests was without its good points. The love for literature and poetry, which it principally expounded, developed in the people the more agreeable qualities which have made the Persian probably the most polite man on this earth. The clerical education, indeed, worked first upon the heart, then upon the brain ; it taught reverence for one's parents, love for one's neighbours, and obedience to one's superiors ; it expounded soft, charitable ways in preference to aggression or selfishness—not the right instead of the duty—as is frequently the case in secular schools.

But softness, consideration, poetry, and charity are things of the past ; they can only be indulged in by barbarians ; in civilisation, unluckily, there is very little use for them except for advertisement sake. So the Persians were wise to resort to our style of education, which may yet be the means of saving their country. They will lose their courteousness—they are fast beginning to do that already—their filial love, their charity, and all

the other good qualities they may possess ; only when these are gone will they rank in civilisation quite as high as any European nation !

The wealthier people send their sons to be educated abroad in European capitals, and one cannot help being struck by the wonderful ease with which these fellows master not only languages, but science and extremely complex subjects. Whether this is due to the brain of young Persians being fresher owing to its not having been overtaxed for generations—and therefore the impressions are clearly received and firmly recorded, or whether the mode of life is apt to develop the brain more than any other part of their anatomy is difficult to say, but the quickness and lucidity of the average young Persian brain is certainly astounding when compared to that of European brains of the same ages.

The Persian, too, has a most practical way of looking at things,—when he does take the trouble to do so—not sticking to one point of view but observing his subject from all round, as it were, with a good deal of philosophical humour that is of great help to him in all he undertakes ; and it is curious to see how fast and thoroughly the younger Persians of better families can adapt themselves to European ways of thought and manner without the least embarrassment or concern. In this, I think, they surpass any other Asiatic nation, the small community of the Parsees of India alone excepted.

And here a word or two on the education of

Englishmen intending to make a living abroad, especially in Asia, and particularly in Persia, will not, I hope, be out of place. With the fast-growing intercourse between East and West, sufficient stress cannot be laid upon the fact that sound commercial education on up-to-date principles is chiefly successful in countries undergoing the processes of development, and that, above all, the careful study of foreign languages—the more the better—should occupy the attention of the many students in our country who are to live in Asia. There is a great deal too much time absolutely wasted in English schools over Latin and Greek, not to mention the exaggerated importance given to games like cricket, football, tennis, which, if you like, are all very well to develop the arms and legs, but seem to have quite the reverse effect upon the brain.

Yet what is required nowadays to carry a man through the world are brains, and not muscular development of limbs. As for a classical education, it may be all right for a clergyman, a lawyer, or for a man with high but unprofitable literary tastes, but not for fellows who are not only to be useful to themselves, but indirectly to the mother country, by developing the industries or trades of lands to be opened up.

If I may be permitted to say so, one of the principal qualities which we should develop in our young men is the sense of observation in all its forms—a sense which is sadly neglected in English education. It has always been my

humble experience that one learns more of use in one hour's keen observation than by reading all the books in the world, and when that sense is keenly developed it is quite extraordinary with what facility one can do things which the average unobservant man thinks utterly impossible. It most certainly teaches one to simplify everything and always to select the best and easiest way in all one undertakes, which, after all, is the way leading to success.

Again, when observation is keenly developed, languages—or, in fact, anything else—can be learnt with amazing facility. The “knack” of learning languages is only due to observation; the greatest scientific discoveries have been due to mere observation; the greatest commercial enterprises are based on the practical results of observation. But it is astounding how few people do really observe, not only carefully, but at all. The majority of folks might as well be blind for what they see for themselves. They follow like sheep what they are told to do, and make their sons and grandsons do the same; and few countries suffer more from this than England.

When travelling in the East one cannot help being struck by the difference of young Englishmen and foreigners employed in similar capacities in business places. The foreigner is usually fluent in four, five or six different languages, and has a smattering of scientific knowledge which, if not very deep, is at any rate sufficient for the purposes required. He is well up in engineering, electricity, the latest inventions, explorations, dis-

coveries and commercial devices. He will talk sensibly on almost any subject ; he is moderate in his habits and careful with his money.

Now, take the young Englishman. He seldom knows well more than one language ; occasionally one finds fellows who can speak two tongues fluently ; rarely one who is conversant with three or four. His conversation generally deals with drinks, the latest or coming races, the relative values of horses and jockeys and subsequent offers to bet—in which he is most proficient. The local polo, if there is any, or tennis tournaments afford a further subject for conversation, and then the lack of discussible topics is made up by more friendly calls for drinks. The same subjects are gone through with variations time after time, and that is about all.

Now, I maintain that this should not be so, because, taking things all round, the young Englishman is really *au fond* brighter and infinitely more intelligent than foreigners. It is his education and mode of living that are at fault, not the individual himself, and this our cousins the Americans have long since discovered ; hence their steaming ahead of us in every line with the greatest ease.

We hear that the Englishman is no good at learning languages, but that is again a great mistake. I do not believe that there is any other nation in Europe, after the Russians, who have greater facility—if properly cultivated—and are more capable of learning languages to perfection than the English. I am not referring to

every shameless holiday tripper on the Continent who makes himself a buffoon by using misapplied, mispronounced, self-mistaught French or Italian or German sentences, but I mean the rare observant Englishman who studies languages seriously and practically.

Speaking from experience, in my travels—which extend more or less all over the world—I have ever found that Englishmen, when put to it, could learn languages perfectly. Hence my remarks, which may seem blunt but are true. Truly there is no reason why the gift of learning languages should be neglected in England,—a gift which, I think, is greatly facilitated by developing in young people musical qualities, if any, and training the ear to observe and receive sounds correctly,—a fact to which we are just beginning to wake up.

It is undoubted that the command of several languages gives a commercial man an enormous advantage in the present race of European nations in trying to obtain a commercial superiority; but the command of a language requires, too, to a limited extent the additional etiquette of ways and manners appropriate to it to make it quite efficient; and these, as well as the proper manner of speaking the language itself, can only, I repeat, be learnt by personal observation.

The Germans train commercial men specially for the East, men who visit every nook of Asiatic countries where trade is to be developed, and closely study the natives, their ways of living, their requirements, reporting in the most minute

manner upon them, so that the German manufacturers may provide suitable articles for the various markets. In the specific case of Persia, Russia, the predominant country in the North, does exactly the same. The Russian manufacturer studies his client, his habits, his customs, and supplies him with what he desires and cherishes, and does not, like the British manufacturer, export to Eastern countries articles which may very well suit the farmer, the cyclist, or the cabman in England, but not the Persian agriculturist, camel-driver, or highwayman.

The everlasting argument that the British manufacturer supplies a better article borders very much on the idiotic. First of all, setting apart the doubt whether he does really supply a better article, what is certain is that a "better article" may not be of the kind that is wanted at all by the people. There are in this world climates and climates, peoples and peoples, religions and religions, houses and houses, customs and customs ; and therefore the well-made English article (allowing it to be well-made) which suits English people is not always adapted for all other countries, climates, and usages.

Another prevalent mistake in this country is to believe that the Persian, or any other Oriental, will only buy cheap things. The Oriental may endeavour to strike a bargain—for that is one of the chief pleasures of his existence, though a fault which can easily be counter-balanced—but he is ever ready to pay well for what he really wants. Thus, if because of his training in fighting he

requires a certain curl and a particular handle to his knife ; if he fancies a particular pattern printed or woven in the fabrics he imports, and if because of his religious notions he prefers his silver spoons drilled with holes ; there does not seem to be any plausible reason why his wishes should not be gratified as long as he pays for the articles supplied.

We, who own half the world, and ought to know better by this time, seem constantly to forget that our customs, and ways, seem as ridiculous to Orientals (to some of ourselves, too,) quite as ridiculous as theirs to us. In some cases, even, great offence can be caused by trying to enforce our methods too suddenly upon Eastern countries. Civilised people may prefer to blow their noses with an expensive silk handkerchief, which they carefully fold up with contents into the most prominent pocket of their coats ; the unclean Oriental may prefer to close one nostril by pressing it with his finger and from the other forcibly eject extraneous matter to a distance of several feet away, by violent blowing, repeating the operation with the other nostril. This may be thought not quite graceful, but is certainly a most effective method, and possibly cleaner than ours in the end. We may fancy it good manners when in public to show little more of our shirts than the collar and cuffs, but the Persian or the Hindoo, for instance, prefers to let the garment dangle to its full extent outside so as to show its design in full. Again, we may consider it highly unbecoming and improper for ladies

to show their lower limbs above the ankle ; the Persian lady thinks nothing of that, but deems it shocking to show her face.

And so we could go on and on ; in fact, with the Persians, one might almost go as far as saying that, with the exception of eating and drinking and a few other matters, they do most things in a contrary way to ours. They remove their shoes, when we would remove our hats ; they shave their heads and let the beard grow ; they sleep in the day and sit up the greater portion of the night ; they make windows in the roof instead of in the walls ; they inoculate smallpox instead of vaccinating to prevent it ; they travel by night instead of by day.

It would be absurd to believe that we can alter in a day the customs, religions, and manners of millions of natives, and it seems almost incomprehensible that in such long colonial experience as ours we have not yet been able to grasp so simple a fact. But here, again, comes in my contention that our failing is absolute lack of observation ; unless it be indeed our conceited notion that other people must rise up to our standard. Anyhow, we have lost and are losing heavily by it.

We see the Germans and Austrians swamping our own Colonies with goods wherewith our bazaars in India are overflowing ; whereas English articles—if cottons are excepted—are seldom to be seen in the bazaars. This seems indeed a curious state of affairs. Nor do we need to go to India. England itself is over-

flowing with foreign-made goods. Now, why should it not be possible—and certainly more profitable—to meet the wishes of natives of Eastern countries and give them what they want?

There is another matter which greatly hampers the British manufacturer, in his dealings with Persians particularly. It is well to recollect that the blunt way we have of transacting business does not always answer with Orientals. Impatience, too, of which we are ever brimful, is a bad quality to possess in dealings with Persians. Times have gone by when England had practically the monopoly of the trade of the East and could lay down the law to the buyers. The influx of Europeans and the extension of trade to the most remote corners of the globe have increased to such an extent during the last few years—and with these competition—that the exporter can no longer use the slack, easy ways of half-a-century ago, when commercial supremacy was in our hands, and must look out for himself.

A knowledge of the language, with a conciliatory, courteous manner, a good stock of patience and a fair capacity for sherbet, hot tea and coffee, will, in Persia, carry a trader much further in his dealings than the so-called “smarter ways” appreciated in England or America; and another point to be remembered in countries where the natives are unbusiness-like, as they are in Persia, is that personal influence and trust—which the natives can never dissociate from

the bargain in hand—go a very long way towards successful trading in Iran.

This is, to my mind, one of the principal reasons of Russian commercial successes in Northern Persia. We will not refer here to the ridiculous idea, so prevalent in England, that Russia was never and never will be a manufacturing country. Russia is very fast developing her young industries, which are pushed to the utmost by her Government, and what is more, the work is done in a remarkably practical way, by people who possess a thorough knowledge of what they are doing. The natives and the geographical features of the country have been carefully studied, and the Russian trading scheme is carried firmly and steadily on an unshakable base. We sit and express astonishment at Russian successes in Persia ; the people at home can hardly be made to realise them, and I have heard people even discredit them ; but this is only the beginning and nothing to what we shall see later on unless we proceed to work on similar sensible lines. It certainly arouses admiration to see what the Russians can do and how well they can do it with ridiculously small capital, when we waste, absolutely waste, immense sums and accomplish nothing, or even the reverse of what we intend to accomplish. But there again is the difference between the observant and the unobservant man.

CHAPTER XVIII

Persia's industrial, mineral and agricultural resources—Climate of various districts—Ghilan's trade—Teheran and the surrounding country—Khorassan and Sistan—The Caspian provinces—Mazanderan, Astrabad and Azerbaijan—Russian activity and concessions in Azerbaijan—Hamadan—The Malayer and Borujird districts—The nomads of Kurdistan—Naphtha—The tribes of Pusht-i-kuh—The pastoral people of Luristan—Arabistan—Farsistan—Laristan—Shiraz wines—Persian Beluchistan.

THE geographical situation of Persia, its extent, the altitude of its plateau above the sea level, its vast deserts and its mountain ranges, give the country a good selection of climates, temperatures and vegetation. We have regions of intense tropical heat and of almost arctic cold, we have temperate regions, we have healthy regions, and regions where everybody is fever-stricken. Regions with moist air, plenty of water, and big marshes, and dreary waterless deserts.

Necessarily such natural conditions are bound to give a great variety of resources which show themselves in various guises. A quick survey of the agricultural, industrial and mineral resources of the principal provinces of Persia according to up-to-date information may not be out of place,

and will help the reader to appreciate the journey through some of the districts mentioned.

We have already been through Ghilan with its almost temperate climate in the lowlands, but damp in the northern portion, where fever is rampant, but where, at the same time, luxuriant vegetation with thick forests, grass in abundance, paddy fields for the extensive cultivation of rice, olive-groves, vineyards, cotton, wheat, tobacco, sugar-cane, fruit and all kinds of vegetables flourish; while the production of silk for export on a large and fast-increasing scale—it might be increased enormously if more modern methods were adopted—and wool and cotton fabrics, mostly for the Persian market, are manufactured. It exports, mostly to Russia, great quantities of dried fruit, wool, cotton, and tobacco (made into cigarettes), salt fish, caviare and oil.

South-east of Ghilan we find Teheran on a high plateau, its situation giving it a delightful and healthy climate, but very scanty agricultural resources owing to lack of water. In and near the capital city there are good gardens, grown at considerable expense and trouble, but very little other vegetation. We have seen in previous chapters what the industries of the capital, both native and foreign, are, and what they amount to; there is also a manufacture of glazed tiles, quite artistic, but not to be compared in beauty of design, colour and gloss with the ancient ones. Teheran is dependent on the neighbouring provinces and Europe for nearly everything.

This is not, however, the case with Isfahan,

the ancient capital, in the province of which cotton, wheat, Indian corn, tobacco and opium are grown in fair quantities, the last-named for export. Mules and horses are reared, and there are several flourishing industries, such as carpet-making, metal work, leather tanneries, gold and silver work, and silk and wool fabrics.

To the east we have Khorassan and Sistan, a great wheat-growing country with some good pastures, and also producing opium, sugar-cane, dates and cotton. In summer the northerly winds sweeping over the desert are unbearable, and the winter is intensely cold. In the northern part of Khorassan snow falls during the coldest months, but in Sistan the winter is temperate. Life is extremely cheap for natives in Sistan, which is a favourite resort for camel men and their beasts, both from Afghanistan and Beluchistan. Northern Khorassan is the great centre of turquoise mining ; copper and coal are also found there, but its local trade, now that the export of grain is forbidden, is mostly in opium, worked leather, wool and excellent horses, which can be purchased for very little money. Camels, both loading and riding (or fast-going camels) are also reared here in the southern portion of the province, the northern part being too cold for them in winter.

The handsomest and richest districts of Persia, but not the healthiest, are undoubtedly the northern ones on the Caspian Sea, or bordering on Russian territory, such as Mazanderan, Astrabad, and Azerbaijan. In the

first two, rice is grown in large quantities, castor-oil, wheat, cotton and barley ; and in Mazanderan extensive pasturages are found on the hills for sheep ; but not so in Astrabad, which, owing to its peculiar formation, is exposed to broiling heat on the sandy wastes, and to terrific cold on the mountains, but has a fairly temperate climate in the southern portion of the province. These—if the production of silk is excepted—are mostly agricultural districts. At one time Mazanderan had beautiful forests which are now fast being destroyed. Considerable bartering is carried on between the towns and the nomad tribes, in rugs, carpets, horses and mules, against grain, rice, felts and woollen cloths of local manufacture.

Azerbaijan, the most northern province of Persia, with Tabriz as a centre, is very rich in agricultural products, particularly in rice and wheat. Notwithstanding the severe climate in winter, when the snowfall is rather heavy, and the thermometer down to 20° below zero centigrade in February, there are good vineyards in the neighbourhood of Tabriz, and most excellent vegetables and fruit. Tobacco is successfully grown (and manufactured for the pipe and into cigarettes). The heat in summer is intense, with hot winds and dust storms ; but owing to the altitude (4,420 feet at Tabriz) the nights are generally cool. In the spring there are torrential rains, and also towards the end of the autumn, but the months of May, June, October and November are quite pleasant.

The local trade of Azerbaijan is insignificant, but being on the Russian border the transit trade has of late assumed large proportions, and is increasing fast. The importation, for instance, of Turkey-reds by Russia is growing daily, and also the importation of silk, in cocoons and manufactured, velvet, woollen goods, various cotton goods, raw wool, dyes (such as henna, indigo, cochineal and others), and sugar, the principal import of all. With the exception of tea, indigo and cochineal, which come from India, the imports into Azerbaijan come almost altogether from Russia, Turkey, Austria-Hungary and France. The Russian trade in sugar is enormous from this quarter.

The carpet trade, which at one time seemed to be dying out, is now about to enter on a prosperous phase; but not so the wool-weaving, which does not go beyond the local market. Firearms are manufactured and sold to the Kurds, and jewellery is made; but the principal exports are dried fruit, raisins, almonds, pistachios, chiefly to Russia and Turkey; also gum, oils, raw metals (copper, iron), hides, precious stones, alimentary products (honey and dried vegetables), various kinds of wood, live stock (mainly sheep and oxen), tobacco, raw and manufactured, dyes, and raw and manufactured cotton and silk, carpets, rugs, and cloth.

All these exports are to Russia and Turkey, and do not all necessarily come from Azerbaijan. The Russians are displaying great activity in this province, and have established an important branch

of their "Banque d'Escompte et de Prêts de Perse." They have obtained road, railway, and mining concessions, and according to the report of our consul in Tabriz, the Russian Bank makes advances, to the extent of fifty per cent., to merchants dealing in Russian goods, especially to native exporters of dried fruit, such advances being repaid in Russia by the sale of such produce, or in Persia by the sale of corresponding imports of manufactured goods.

Tabriz itself, being a centre of export of the produce of Northern Persia, is a promising field for banking enterprise, and will assume greater importance even than it has now when the carriage road scheme, a concession which was granted by the Shah, is completed, and furnishes easier communication for trade and travelling purposes. Russian engineers are said to have surveyed and mapped the country for the establishment of a railway system in Azerbaijan.

The mineral resources of Azerbaijan are said to be considerable, iron being found in rich deposits of hematite; sulphur, copper and arsenical pyrites, bitumen, lignite, salt, mineral, ferruginous and sulphurous springs, and variegated marble. A similar geological formation is found extending to Hamadan, where beds of lignite and anthracite exist, and fine marbles and granites are to be found. Here, too, we have a trifling market for local produce, but a considerable transit trade between the capital and Kermanshah, Bagdad and Tabriz.

Hamadan is mostly famous for its capital

tanneries of leather and for its metal work ; but its climate is probably the worst in Persia, if the suffocating Gulf coast is excepted—intensely cold in winter and spring, moist and rainy during the rest of the year. This produces good pasturages and gives excellent vegetables, wine of sorts, and a flourishing poppy culture—a speciality of the province.

The same remarks might apply to the adjoining (south) Malayer and Borujird districts, which, however, possess a more temperate climate, although liable to sudden terrific storms accompanied by torrential rains. There is a great deal of waste lands in these regions ; but, where irrigated and properly cultivated, wheat flourishes, as well as fruit trees, vines, vegetables, poppies, cotton and tobacco. The people are extremely industrious, being occupied chiefly in carpet-making for foreign export, and preparing opium and dried fruit, as well as dyed cottons. Gold dust is said to be found in beds of streams and traces of copper in quartz.

Other provinces, such as Kurdistan, are inhabited by nomadic peoples, who have a small trade in horses, arms, opium, wool and dates ; but the cultivation of land is necessarily much neglected except for the supply of local needs. In many parts it is almost impossible, as for five or six winter months the soil is buried in snow, and the heat of the summer is unbearable. There seem to be no intermediate seasons. The people live mostly on the caravan traffic from Bagdad to various trading centres of Persia, and they manu-

facture coarse cloths, rugs and earthenware of comparatively little marketable value. Naphtha does exist, as well as other bituminous springs, but it is doubtful whether the quantity is sufficient and whether the naphtha wells are accessible enough to pay for their exploitation.

That naphtha does exist, not only in Kurdistan, but in Pusht-i-kuh, Luristan, and all along the zone extending south of the Caucasus, is possible; but whether those who bore wells for oil in those regions will make fortunes similar to those made in the extraordinarily rich and exceptionally situated Baku region, is a different matter altogether, which only the future can show.

The tribes of Pusht-i-kuh are somewhat wild and unreliable. On the mountain sides are capital pasturages. A certain amount of grain, tobacco and fruit are grown, principally for local consumption.

In Luristan, too, we have partly a nomad pastoral population. Being a mountainous region there are extremes of temperature. In the plains the heat is terrific; but higher up the climate is temperate and conducive to good pasturages and even forests. As in the Pusht-i-kuh mountain district, here, too, wheat, rice and barley are grown successfully in huge quantities, and the vine flourishes at certain altitudes as well as fruit trees. The local commerce consists principally in live stock, the horses being quite good, and there is a brisk trade in arms and ammunition.

There remain now the large districts of Khuzistan, better known as Arabistan, Farsistan



SAHIB DIVAN, who was at various periods Governor of Shiraz and Khorassan

and Laristan. The heat in these provinces is terrible during the summer, and the latter district is further exposed to the Scirocco winds of the Gulf, carrying with them suffocating sand clouds. If properly developed, and if the barrage of the Karun river at Ahwaz were put in thorough repair, the plains of Arabistan could be made the richest in Persia. Wheat, rice and forage were grown in enormous quantities at one time, and cotton, tobacco, henna, indigo and sugar-cane. But this region, being of special interest to Britain, a special chapter is devoted to it, as well as to the possibilities of Farsistan and Laristan, to which future reference will be made.

The trade in Shiraz wines is fairly developed, and they are renowned all over Persia. Considering the primitive method in which they are made they are really excellent, especially when properly matured. The better ones resemble rich sherries, Madeira and port wine.

Indigo, horses, mules and carpets form the trade of the province which, they say, possesses undeveloped mineral resources such as sulphur, lead, presumed deposits of coal, mercury, antimony and nickel.

Persian Beluchistan is quite undeveloped so far, and mostly inhabited by nomad tribes, somewhat brigand-like in many parts and difficult to deal with. They manufacture rugs and saddle-bags and breed good horses and sheep. Their trade is insignificant, and a good deal of their country is barren. The climate is very hot, and in many parts most unhealthy.

CHAPTER XIX

A Persian wedding—Polygamy—Seclusion of women—Match-makers—Subterfuges—The *Nomzad*, or official betrothal day—The wedding ceremony in the harem—For luck—The wedding procession—Festival—Sacrifices of sheep and camels—The last obstacle, the *ruhmah*—The bride's endowment—The bridegroom's settlement—Divorces—A famous well for unfaithful women—Women's influence—Division of property.

THE general European idea about Persian matrimonial affairs is about as inaccurate as is nearly every other European popular notion of Eastern customs. We hear a great deal about Harems, and we fancy that every Persian must have dozens of wives, while there are people who seriously believe that the Shah has no less than one wife for each day of the year, or 365 in all ! That is all very pretty fiction, but differs considerably from real facts.

First of all, it may be well to repeat that by the Mahommedan doctrine no man can have more than four wives, and this on the specified condition that he is able to keep them in comfort, in separate houses, with separate attendants, separate personal jewellery, and that he will look upon them equally, showing no special favour to

any of them which may be the cause of jealousy or envy. All these conditions make it well-nigh impossible for any man of sound judgment to embark in polygamy. Most well-to-do Persians, therefore, only have one wife.

Another important matter to be taken into consideration is, that no Persian woman of a good family will ever marry a man who is already married. So that the chances of legal polygamy become at once very small indeed in young men of the better classes, who do not wish to ruin their career by marrying below their own level.

An exception should be made with the lower and wealthy middle classes, who find a satisfaction in numbers to make up for quality, and who are the real polygamists of the country. But even in their case the real wives are never numerous—never above the number permitted by the Koran,—the others being merely concubines, whether temporary or permanent. The Shah himself has no more than one first wife, with two or three secondary ones.

In a country where women are kept in strict seclusion as they are in Persia, the arrangement of matrimony is rather a complicated matter. Everybody knows that in Mussulman countries a girl can only be seen by her nearest relations, who by law cannot marry her, such as her father, grandfather, brothers and uncles—but not by her cousins, for weddings between cousins are very frequently arranged in Persia.

It falls upon the mother or sisters of the

would-be bridegroom to pick a suitable girl for him, as a rule, among folks of their own class, and report to him in glowing terms of her charms, social and financial advantages. If he has no mother and sisters, then a complaisant old lady friend of the family undertakes to act as middlewoman. There are also women who are professional match-makers—quite a remunerative line of business, I am told. Anyhow, when the young man has been sufficiently allured into matrimonial ideas, if he has any common sense he generally wishes to see the girl before saying yes or no. This is arranged by a subterfuge.

The women of the house invite the girl to their home, and the young fellow is hidden behind a screen or a window or a wall, wherein convenient apertures have been made for him, unperceived, to have a good look at the proposed young lady. This is done several times until the boy is quite satisfied that he likes her.

The primary difficulty being settled, his relations proceed on a visit to the girl's father and mother, and ask them to favour their son with their daughter's hand.

If the young man is considered well off, well-to-do, sober and eligible in every way, consent is given. A day is arranged for the Nomzad—the official betrothal day. All the relations, friends and acquaintances of the two families are invited, and the women are entertained in the harem while the men sit outside in the handsome courts and gardens. The bridegroom's relations have brought with them presents of jewellery, accord-

ing to their means and positions in life, with a number of expensive shawls, five, six, seven or more, and a mirror. Also some large trays of candied sugar.

After a great consumption of tea, sherbet, and sweets, the young man is publicly proclaimed suitable for the girl. Music and dancing (by professionals) are lavishly provided for the entertainment of guests, on a large or small scale, according to the position of the parents.

Some time elapses between this first stage of a young man's doom and the ceremony for the legal contract and actual wedding. There is no special period of time specified, and the parties can well please themselves as to the time when the nuptial union is to be finally effected.

When the day comes the parties do not go to the mosque nor the convenient registry office—Persia is not yet civilised enough for the latter—but a *Mujtehed* or high priest is sent for, who brings with him a great many other Mullahs, the number in due proportion to the prospective backshish they are to receive for their services.

The wedding ceremony takes place in the bride's house, where on the appointed day bands, dancing, singing, and sweets in profusion are provided for the great number of guests invited.

The high priest eventually adjourns to the harem, where all the women have collected with the bride, the room being partitioned off with a curtain behind which the women sit. The bride and her mother (or other lady) occupy seats directly behind the curtain, while the priest with

the bridegroom and his relations take places in the vacant portion of the room.

The priest in a stentorian voice calls out to the girl :—

“This young man, son of so-and-so, etc., etc., wants to be your slave. Will you accept him as your slave ?”

(No reply. Trepidation on the bridegroom’s part.)

The priest repeats his question in a yet more stentorian voice.

Again no reply. The women collect round the bride and try to induce her to answer. They stroke her on her back, and caress her face, but she sulks and is shy and plays with her dress, but says nothing. When the buzzing noise of the excited women-folk behind the curtain has subsided, the priest returns to his charge, while the expectant bridegroom undergoes the worst quarter of an hour of his life.

The third time of asking is generally the last, and twice the girl has already not answered. It is a terrible moment. Evidently she is not over anxious to bring about the alliance, or is the reluctance a mere feminine expedient to make it understood from the beginning that she is only conferring a great favour on the bridegroom by condescending to marry him ? The latter hypothesis is correct, for when the priest thunders for the third time his former question, a faint voice—after a tantalizing delay—is heard to say “Yes.”

The bridegroom, now that this cruel ordeal is over, begins to breathe again.

The priest is not yet through his work, and further asks the girl whether she said "Yes" out of her will, or was forced to say it. Then he appeals to the women near her to testify that this was so, and that the voice he heard behind the curtain was actually the girl's voice. These various important points being duly ascertained, in appropriate Arabic words the priest exclaims :

"I have married this young lady to this man and this man to this young lady."

The men present on one side of the curtain nod and (in Arabic) say they accept the arrangement. The women are overheard to say words to the same effect from the other side of the partition. Congratulations are exchanged, and more sherbet, tea and sweets consumed.

The religious ceremony is over, but not the trials of the bridegroom, now legal husband.

When sufficient time has elapsed for him to recover from his previous mental anguish, he is conveyed by his mother or women relatives into the harem. All the women are veiled and line the walls of the drawing-room, where a solitary chair or cushion on the floor is placed at the end of the room. He is requested to sit upon it, which he meekly does. A small tray is now brought in with tiny little gold coins (silver if the people are poor) mixed with sweets. The bridegroom bends his head ; and sweets and coins are poured upon his back and shoulders. Being round—the coins, not the shoulders—they run about and are scattered all over the room. All the ladies present gracefully stoop

and seize one pellet of gold, which is kept for good luck ; then servants are called in to collect the remainder which goes to their special benefit.

This custom is not unlike our flinging rice for luck at a married couple.

The bridegroom then returns to the men's quarters, where he receives the hearty congratulations of relatives and friends alike.

From this moment the girl becomes his wife, and the husband has the right to see her whenever he chooses, but not to cohabit with her until further ordeals have been gone through.

The husband comes to meet his wife for conversation's sake in a specially reserved room in the harem, and each time he comes he brings presents of jewellery or silks or other valuables to ingratiate himself. So that, by the time the real wedding takes place, they can get to be quite fond of one another.

There is no special limit of time for the last ceremony to be celebrated. It is merely suited to the convenience of the parties when all necessary arrangements are settled, and circumstances permit.

Usually for ten days or less before the wedding procession takes place a festival is held in the bridegroom's house, when the Mullahs, the friends, acquaintances, relations and neighbours are invited—fresh guests being entertained on each night. Music, dancing, and lavish refreshments are again provided for the guests. The men, of course, are entertained separately in the

men's quarter, and the women have some fun all to themselves in the harem.

On the very last evening of the festival a grand procession is formed in order to convey the bride from her house to that of her husband. He, the husband, waits for her at his residence, where he is busy entertaining guests.

All the bridegroom's relations, with smart carriages—and, if he is in some official position, as most Persians of good families are,—with infantry and cavalry soldiers, bands and a large following of friends and servants on horseback and on foot proceed to the bride's house.

A special carriage is reserved for the bride and her mother or old lady relation, and another for the bridesmaids. She is triumphantly brought back to the bridegroom's house, her relations and friends adding to the number in the procession.

Guns are fired and fireworks let off along the road and from the bride's and bridegroom's houses. One good feature of all Persian festivities is that the poor are never forgotten. So, when the bride is driven along the streets, a great many sheep and camels are sacrificed before her carriage to bring the bride luck and to feed with their flesh the numberless people who congregate round to divide the meat of the slaughtered animals. In the house of the bridegroom, too, any number of sheep are sacrificed and distributed among the poor.

There are great rejoicings when the procession arrives at the house, where the bridegroom is

anxiously awaiting to receive his spouse. As she alights from the carriage more sheep are sacrificed on the door-step—and the husband, too, is sacrificed to a certain extent, for again he has to content himself with merely conducting his bride to the harem and to leave her there. It is only late in the evening, when all the guests, stuffed with food, have departed, that the husband is led by his best man to a special room prepared for him and his wife in the harem. The bride comes in, heavily veiled, in the company of her father or some old and revered relation, who clasps the hands of husband and wife and joins them together, making a short and appropriate speech of congratulation and good wishes for a happy conjugal existence. Then very wisely retreats.

There is yet another obstacle : the removal of the long embroidered veil which hangs gracefully over the bride's head down to her knees. This difficulty is easily surmounted by another present of jewellery, known as the *ruhmuhah* or "reward for showing the face." There is no further reward needed after that, and they are at last husband and wife, not only in theory but in fact.

True, some gold coins have to be left under the furniture to appease expecting servants, and the next day fresh trials have to be endured by the bride, who has to receive her lady friends and accept their most hearty congratulations. This means more music, more professional dancing, more sweets, more sherbet, more tea. But

gradually, even the festivities die out, and wife and husband can settle down to a really happy, quiet, family life, devoid of temptations and full of fellow-feeling and thoughtfulness.

Ten days before this last event takes place the wife is by custom compelled to send to the husband's house the endowment which by her contract she must supply : the whole furniture of the apartments complete from the kitchen to the drawing-room, both for the man's quarter and for her own. Besides this—which involves her in considerable expense—she, of course, further conveys with her anything of which she may be the rightful owner. Her father, if well-off, will frequently present her on her wedding-day with one or more villages or a sum in cash, and occasionally will settle on her what would go to her in the usual course of time after his death. All this—in case of divorce or litigation—remains the wife's property.

On the other hand, the bridegroom, or his parents for him, have to settle a sum of money on the bride before she consents to the marriage, and this is legally settled upon her by the Mullah in the wedding contract. She has a right to demand it whenever she pleases.

It can be seen by all this that a Persian legal marriage is not a simple matter nor a cheap undertaking. The expense and formalities connected with each wedding are enormous, so that even if people were inclined to polygamy it is really most difficult for them to carry their desire into effect. Among the nobility it has become

unfashionable and is to-day considered quite immoral to have more than one wife.

Partly because the marriages are seldom the outcome of irresistible—but fast burning out—love ; partly because it is difficult for a husband and almost impossible for a wife to be unfaithful, divorces in Persia are not common. Besides, on divorcing a wife, the husband has to pay her in full the settlement that has been made upon her, and this prevents many a rash attempt to get rid of one's better-half. To kill an unfaithful wife is, in the eyes of Persians, a cheaper and less degrading way of obtaining justice against an unpardonable wrong.

One hears a good deal in Persia about a famous and extraordinarily deep well—near Shiraz, I believe—into which untrue wives were precipitated by their respective offended husbands, or by the public executioner ; and also how dishonoured women are occasionally stoned to death ; but these cases are not very frequent nowadays. The Persian woman is above all her husband's most intimate friend. He confides all—or nearly all—his secrets to her. She does the same, or nearly the same with him. Their interests are mutual, and the love for their own children unbounded. Each couple absolutely severed from the outside world, forbidden to get intoxicated by their religion, with no excitements to speak of, and the wife in strict seclusion—there is really no alternative left for them than to be virtuous. Women have in Persia, as in other countries, great influence over

their respective husbands, and through these mediums feminine power extends very far, both in politics and commerce.

At the husband's death the property is divided among his children, each male child taking two shares to each one share for every girl's part, after one-eighth of the whole property has been paid to the deceased's widow, who is entitled to that amount by right.

Most praiseworthy union exists in most Persian families, filial love and veneration for parents being quite as strong as paternal or maternal affection. Extreme reverence for old age in any class of man is another trait to be admired in the Persian character.

CHAPTER XX

Persian women—Their anatomy—Their eyes—*Surmah*—Age of puberty—The descendants of Mohammed—Infanticide—Circumcision—Deformities and abnormalities—The ear—The teeth and dentistry—The nose—A Persian woman's indoor dress—The *yel*—The *tadji* and other jewels—Out-of-door dress—The *Chakchur*—The *ruh-band*—The *Chudder*.

PERSIA, they say, is the country of the loveliest women in the world. It probably has that reputation because few foreign male judges have ever seen them. The Persians themselves certainly would prefer them to any other women. Still, there is no doubt, from what little one sees of the Persian woman, that she often possesses very beautiful languid eyes, with a good deal of animal magnetism in them. Her skin is extremely fair—as white as that of an Italian or a French woman—with a slight yellowish tint which is attractive. They possess when young very well modelled arms and legs, the only fault to be found among the majority of them being the frequent thickness of the wrists and ankles, which rather takes away from their refinement. In the very highest classes this is not so accentuated. The women are usually of

a fair height, not too small, and carry themselves fairly well, particularly the women of the lower classes who are accustomed to carry weights on their head. The better-off women walk badly, with long steps and a consequent stoop forward ; whereas the poorer ones walk more firmly with a movement of the hips and with the spine well arched inwards. The neck lacks length, but is nicely rounded, and the head well set on the shoulders.

Anatomically, the body is not striking either for its beauty or its strength or suppleness. The breasts, except with girls of a very tender age, become deformed, and very pendant, and the great tendency to fatness rather interferes with the artistic beauty of their outlines.

The skeleton frame of a Persian woman is curiously constructed, the hip-bones being extremely developed and broad, whereas the shoulder blades and shoulders altogether are very narrow and undeveloped. The hands and feet are generally good, particularly the hand, which is less developed and not so coarse as the lower limbs generally and the feet in particular. The fingers are usually long and quite supple, with well-proportioned nails. The thumb is, nevertheless, hardly ever in good proportion with the rest of the hand. It generally lacks length and character. The feet bear the same characteristics as the hands except, as I have said, that they are infinitely coarser. Why this should be I cannot explain, except that intermarriage with different races and social requirements may be the cause of it.

The head I have left to the last, because it is from an artist's point of view the most picturesque part of a Persian woman's anatomy. It may possibly lack fine chiselled features and angularity ; and the first impression one receives on looking at a Persian woman's face is that it wants strength and character—all the lines of the face being broad, uninterrupted curves. The nose is broad and rounded, the cheeks round, the chin round, the lips large, voluptuous and round—very seldom tightly closed ; in fact, the lower lip is frequently drooping. But when it comes to eyes, eyelashes and eyebrows, there are few women in the world who can compete with the Persian. There is exuberant fire and expression in the Persian feminine organs of vision, large and almond-shaped, well-cut, and softened by eyelashes of abnormal length, both on the upper and lower lid. The powerful, gracefully-curved eyebrows extend far into the temples, where they end into a fine point, from the nose, over which they are very frequently joined. The iris of the eye is abnormally large, of very rich dark velvety brown, with jet black pupils, and the so-called "white of the eye" is of a much darker tinge than with Europeans—almost a light bluish grey. The women seem to have wonderful control over the muscles of the eyelids and brows, which render the eyes dangerously expressive. The habit of artificially blackening the under lid with *Surmah*, too, adds, to no mean extent, to the luminosity and vivid power of the eyes in contrast to the alabaster-like,



PERSIAN WOMAN AND CHILD.



really beautiful skin of the younger Persian women.

I said "younger," for owing to racial and climatic conditions the Persian female is a full-grown woman in every way at the age of ten or twelve, sometimes even younger. They generally keep in good compact condition until they are about twenty or twenty-five, when the fast expanding process begins, deforming even the most beautiful into shapeless masses of flesh and fat. They are said, however, to be capable of bearing children till the mature age of forty to forty-five, although from my own observation thirty-five to forty I should take to be the more common average at which Persian women are in full possession of prolific powers.

In the case of Sayids, the descendants of Mahommed, both sexes of whom are reputed for their extraordinary powers and vitality, women are said not to become sterile till after the age of fifty.

Whether this is a fact or not, I cannot say, but it is certain that the Sayids are a superior race altogether, more wiry and less given to orgies—drinking and smoking,—which may account for their natural powers being preserved to a later age than with most other natives of Persia. Their women are very prolific. Sayid men and women are noticeable even from a tender age for their robustness and handsome features. They are dignified and serious in their demeanour, honest and trustworthy, and are a fine race altogether.

Infanticide after birth is not very common in Persia, but abortion artificially procured has, particularly of late, become frequent for the prevention of large families that cannot be supported. This is done by primitive methods, not dissimilar to those used in European countries. Medicine is occasionally also administered internally. These cases are naturally illegal, and although the law of the country is lenient—or, rather, short-sighted—in such matters, any palpable case, if discovered, would be severely punished.

The umbilicus of newly-born children is inevitably tied by a doctor and not by a member of the family, as with some nations. Circumcision is practised on male children when at the age of forty days. It is merely performed as a sanitary precaution, and is not undergone for religion's sake.

There are few countries where deformities and abnormalities are as common as they are in Persia. In women less than in men ; still, they too are afflicted with a good share of Nature's freaks. The harelip is probably the most common abnormality. Webbed and additional fingers and toes come next. Birth-marks are very common—especially very large black moles on the face and body.

Persian ears are very seldom beautiful. They are generally more or less malformed and somewhat coarse in modelling, although they seem to answer pretty well the purpose for which they are created. But although the hearing is very

good in a general sense, I found that the Persian, of either sex, had great difficulty in differentiating very fine modulations of sounds, and this is probably due to the under-development or degeneration of the auricular organ, just the same as in the ears of purely Anglo-Saxon races.

To an observant eye, to my mind, there is no part of people's anatomy that shows character and refinement more plainly than the ear. Much more delicate in texture than the hands or feet, the ear is, on the other hand, less subject to misleading modifications by artificial causes which are bound to affect the other extremities.

The ear of a Persian is, in the greater percentage of cases, the ear of a degenerate. It is coarse and lumpy, and somewhat shapeless, with animal qualities strongly marked in it. Occasionally one does come across a good ear in Persia, but very rarely.

Similar remarks might apply to teeth. When young, men and women have good teeth, of fairly good shape and length, and frequently so very firmly set in their sockets as to allow their possessors to lift heavy weights with them, pulling ropes tight, etc., when the strength of the hands is not sufficient. One frequently notices, however, irregularity, or additional teeth—caused again by intermixture of race—the upper teeth not fitting properly the lower ones, and causing undue friction, early injury to the enamel, and consequent decay. This is also greatly intensified by the unhealthy state of Persian blood, especially in people inhabiting the

cities, where the worst of venereal complaints has crept in a more or less virulent form into the greater part of the population. Add to this, a disorganized digestion, coloration by constant smoking, and the injury to the enamel brought on by the great consumption of sugary stuff; and if one marvels at all it is that Persian teeth are as good and serviceable as they are to a fair age.

Native Persian dentistry is not in a very advanced stage. With the exception of extraction by primitive and painful methods, nothing efficient is done to arrest the progress of decay.

The Persian nose is well shaped—but it is not perfection, mind you—and generally does not perform its duties in a creditable manner. It has nearly all the drawbacks of civilised noses. Partly owing to defective digestive organs and the escaping fumes of decayed teeth, the nose, really very well shaped in young children, generally alters its shape as they get older, and it becomes blocked up with mucous matter, causing it unduly to expand at the bridge, and giving it rather a stumpy, fat appearance. The nostrils are not very sharply and powerfully cut in most cases, and are rounded up and undecided, a sign of pliant character.

Women have better cut and healthier noses than men, as they lead a more wholesome life. In children and young people, however, very handsome noses are to be seen in Persia. The sense of odour is not very keen in either sex; in

fact, it is probably the dullest of all Persian senses, which is not unfortunate for them in a country where potent smells abound. In experimenting upon healthy specimens, it was found that only comparatively strong odours could be detected by them, nor could they distinguish the difference between two different scents, when they did succeed in smelling them at all !

A Persian woman is not seen at her best when she is dressed. This sounds very shocking, but it is quite true. Of all the ugly, inartistic, clumsy, uncomfortable, tasteless, absurd female attires, that of the Persian lady ranks first.

Let us see a Persian lady indoors, and describe her various garments in the order in which they strike the observer. First of all one's eye is caught by a " bundle " of short skirts—usually of very bright colours—sticking out at the hips, and not unlike the familiar attire of our ballet girls—only shorter. These skirts are made of cotton, silk or satin, according to the lady's wealth and position.

There are various versions of how such a fashion was adopted by Persian ladies. It is of comparatively modern importation, and up to fifty or sixty years ago women wore long skirts reaching down to the ankle. The skirts gradually got shorter and shorter as the women got more civilised—so a Persian assures me—and when Nasr-ed-din Shah visited Europe and brought back to his harem the glowing accounts of the ladies' dress—or, rather, undress—at the Empire and Alhambra music-hall ballets,

which seem to have much attracted him, the women of his court, in order to compete with their European rivals, and to gain afresh the favour of their sovereign, immediately adopted a similar attire. Scissors were busy, and down (or up) were the skirts reduced to a minimum length.

As in other countries, fashions in men and women are copied from the Court, and so the women from one end of Persia to the other, in the cities, took up the hideous custom. One of the principal points in the fashion is that the skirt must stick out at the sides. These skirts are occasionally very elaborate, with heavy gold braiding round them, richly embroidered, or covered all over with small pearls. The shape of the skirt is the same in all classes of women, but of course the difference lies in the material with which the dress is made.

Under the skirt appear two heavy, shapeless legs, in long foreign stockings with garters, or in tight trousers of cotton or other light material—a most unseemly sight. When only the family are present the latter garments are frequently omitted.

Perhaps the only attractive part of a woman's indoor toilet is the neat zouave jacket with sleeves, breast and back profusely embroidered in gold, or with pearls. It is called the *yel*. When lady friends are expected to call, some additions are made to the costume. A long veil fastened to the belt and supported on the projecting skirt hangs down to the feet. Sometimes

it is left to drag behind. It is quite transparent, and its purposeless use none of my Persian friends could explain. "The women like it, that is all," was the only answer I could elicit, and that was certainly enough to settle the matter.

Persian women are extremely fond of jewellery, diamonds, pearls and precious stones. On the head, the hair being plastered down with a parting in the centre and knot behind on the neck, a diadem is worn by the smarter ladies, the *tadji*. Those who can afford it have a *tadji* of diamonds, the shape varying according to fashion ; others display sprays of pearls. The *tadji* is a luxurious, heavy ornament only worn on grand occasions ; then there is another more commonly used, the *nim tadji*, or small diadem, a lighter and handsome feathery jewel worn either in the upper centre of the forehead, or very daintily and in a most coquettish way on one side of the head, where it really looks very pretty indeed against the shiny jet black hair of the wearer.

Heavy necklaces of gold, pearls, turquoises and amber are much in vogue, and also solid and elaborate gold rings and bracelets in profusion on the fingers and wrists.

Out of doors women in the cities look very different to what they do indoors, and cannot be accused of any outward immodesty. One suspects blue or black bag-like phantoms whom one meets in the streets to be women, but there is really nothing to go by to make one sure of it, for the street costume of the Persian lady is as complete a disguise as was ever conceived.

Before going out a huge pair of loose trousers or bloomers—the *chakchur*—fastened at the waist and pulled in at the ankle, are assumed, and a *ruh-band*—a thick calico or cotton piece of cloth about a yard wide, hangs in front of the face, a small slit some three to four inches long and one and a half wide, very daintily netted with heavy embroidery, being left for ventilation's sake and as a look-out window. This is fastened by means of a hook behind the head to prevent its falling, and is held down with one hand at the lower part. Over all this the *chudder*—a black or blue piece of silk or cotton about two yards square and matching the colour of the trousers, covers the whole from head to foot, and just leaves enough room in front for the ventilating parallelogram.

In public places this cloak is held with the spare hand quite close to the chin, so that, with the exception of a mass of black or blue clothing and a tiny bit of white embroidery over the eyes, one sees absolutely nothing of the Persian woman when she promenades about the streets. With sloping shoulders, broad hips, and huge bloomers, her silhouette is not unlike a soda-water bottle.

Her feet are socked in white or blue, and she toddles along on dainty slippers with no back to the heels. A husband himself could not recognise his wife out of doors, nor a brother his sister, unless by some special mark on her clothing, such as a spot of grease or a patch—otherwise, poor and rich, young and old, are all dressed alike. Of course the diadem and other

such ornaments are only worn in the house, and the *chudder* rests directly on the head.

Yet with some good fortune one occasionally gets glimpses of women's faces, for face-screens and *chudders* and the rest of them have their ways of dropping occasionally, or being blown away by convenient winds, or falling off unexpectedly. But this is only the case with the prettier women, the ugly old ones being most particular not to disillusion and disappoint the male passers-by.

This is possibly another reason why hasty travellers have concluded that Persian women must all be beautiful.

CHAPTER XXI

The Shah's birthday—Illuminations—The Shah in his automobile—Ministers in audience—Etiquette at the Shah's Court—The Shah—A graceful speaker—The Shah's directness of speech—The Kajars and the Mullahs—The *defilé* of troops—A blaze of diamonds.

THERE are great rejoicings in Teheran and all over Persia on the Shah's birthday and the night previous to it, when grand illuminations of all the principal buildings, official residences and business concerns take place. Large sums of money are spent in decorating the buildings suitably on such an auspicious occasion, not as in our country with cheap, vari-coloured cotton rags and paper floral ornaments, but with very handsome carpets, numberless looking-glasses of all sizes and shapes, pictures in gold frames, plants and fountains. Nor are the lights used of a tawdry kind. No, they are the best candles that money can purchase, fitted in nickel-plated candlesticks with tulip globes—thousands of them—and crystal candelabras of Austrian make, or rows of paraffin lamps hired for the occasion.

It is customary in Teheran even for foreign business houses to illuminate their premises lavishly, and the Atabeg Azam or Prime Minister

and other high officials go during the evening to pay calls in order to show their appreciation of the compliment to their sovereign, and admire the decorations of the leading banks and merchants' buildings.

In front of each illuminated house carpets are spread and a number of chairs are prepared for friends and guests who wish to come and admire the show. Sherbet, tea, coffee, whisky, brandy, champagne, cigarettes and all sorts of other refreshments are provided, and by the time you have gone round to inspect all the places where you have been invited, you have been refreshed to such an extent by the people, who are very jolly and hospitable, that you begin to see the illuminations go round you of their own accord.

The show that I witnessed was very interesting and really well done, the effect in the bazaar, with all the lights reflected in the mirrors, and the gold and carpets against the ancient wood-work of the caravanserais, being quite picturesque. The crowds of open-mouthed natives were, as a whole, well behaved, and quite amusing to watch. They seemed quite absorbed in studying the details of each bit of decoration. The Bank of Persia was decorated with much artistic taste. Side by side, in the wind, two enormous flags—the British and the Persian—flew on its façade.

Fireworks were let off till a late hour of the night from various parts of the town, and bands and strolling musicians played in the squares, in the bazaar, and everywhere.

The following morning the Shah came in his automobile to town from his country residence, driven, as usual, by a Frenchman. The Persian and foreign Ministers were to be received in audience early in the morning, and I was to be presented after by Sir Arthur Hardinge, our Minister at the Shah's Court.

The strict etiquette of any Court—whether European or Eastern—does remind one very forcibly of the comic opera, only it is occasionally funnier.

As early as 9 a.m. we left the Legation in a procession—all on horseback—the officials in their diplomatic uniforms, with plenty of gold braiding, and cocked hats; I in my own frock-coat and somebody else's tall hat, for mine had unluckily come to grief. We rode along the very dusty streets and arrived at the Palace, where we got off our horses. We entered the large court of the Alabaster Throne. There were a great many dismounted cavalry soldiers, and we were then led into a small ante-room on the first floor where all the foreign representatives of other nations in Teheran were waiting, received by a Persian high official.

We were detained here for a considerable time, and then marched through the garden to another building. By the number of pairs of shoes lining both sides of the staircase in quadruple rows, it was evident that his Majesty had many visitors. We were ushered into the Jewelled Globe Room adjoining the Shah's small reception room.



RUKU SULTANEH, Brother of the present Shah.

After some adjustment of clothes and collars in their correct positions, and of swords and belts, the door opened and the Ministers were let in to the Shah's presence. One peculiarity of the Shah's court is that it is etiquette to appear before the sovereign with one's hat on, and making a military salute. In former days carpet slippers were provided for the Ministers to put on over the shoes, but the custom has of late been abandoned, as it looked too ludicrous, even for a court, to see the ministers, secretaries, and attachés in their grand uniforms dragging their feet along for fear of losing a *pantoufle* on the way.

There was the usual speech of greeting and congratulation on the part of the *doyen* Minister, and presently the crowd of foreign representatives returned to the ante-room in the most approved style, walking backwards and stooping low.

My turn came next. As we entered, the Shah was standing almost in the centre of the room, with the familiar aigrette in his *kolah* (black headgear) and his chest a blaze of diamonds. He rested his right hand on a handsome jewelled sword. He looked pale and somewhat worn, but his features were decidedly handsome, without being powerful. One could plainly see depicted on his face an expression of extreme good-nature—almost too soft and thoughtful a face for a sovereign of an Eastern country. His thick underlip added a certain amount of obstinate strength to his features, which was counter-balanced by the dreamy, far-away look of his

eyes heavily shadowed by prominent lids. His thick black eyebrows and huge moustache were in great contrast to the Shah's pallid face. His Majesty appeared bored, and was busy masticating a walnut when we entered, the shell of which lay in *débris* by the side of two additional entire walnuts and a nut-cracker on a small jewelled side-table.

We stood at attention with our hats on while Sir Arthur, who, as we have seen, is a linguist of great distinction, delivered to the sovereign, a most charming and graceful speech in Persian with an oriental fluency of flowery language that nearly took my breath away.

The Shah seemed highly delighted at the nice compliments paid him by our Minister, and graciously smiled in appreciation. Then Sir Arthur broke forth in French—which he speaks like a Frenchman—and with astounding grace proceeded to the presentation. The Shah was curt in his words and much to the point, and I was greatly delighted at the charming directness of his remarks. There was no figure of speech, no tawdry metaphor in the compliment paid me.

I had presented his Majesty with two of my books.

"*Vous écrivez livres ?*" thundered the Shah to me in lame French, as he stroked his moustache in a nervous manner.

"*Malheureusement pour le public, oui, Majesté,*" (Unfortunately for the public, yes, your Majesty), I replied, touching my hat in military fashion.

“ *Combien de livres avez vous écrits ?* ” (How many books have you written ?)

“ *Quatre, Majesté.* ” (Four, your Majesty.)

“ *Combien livres avez vous envoyé moi ?* ” (How many books have you sent me ?) he roared again in his Perso adaptation of French.

“ *Deux, Majesté.* ” (Two, your Majesty.)

“ *Envoyez encore deux autres.* ” (Send the other two.) And with a nod the conversation was over, and we retreated backwards through the glass door, but not before Sir Arthur Hardinge had completed the interview with another most appropriate and graceful little speech.

The foreign Ministers departed, but I was allowed to remain in the Palace grounds to witness the various native officials and representatives paying their salaams to the Shah.

After us the foreigners in Persian employ were received in audience, and it was interesting to notice that they had adopted the Persian head-gear, and some even the Persian pleated frock-coat. The Shah's reception room had a very large window overlooking the garden. The glass was raised and a throne was placed close to the edge of the window on which the Shah seated himself with a *kalian* by his side.

Then began the *défilé* of native representatives. The *Kajars* in their grand robes and white turbans paraded before the window, and then forming a semicircle salaamed the head of their family. One of them stepped forward and chanted a long poem, while the Shah puffed away at the *kalian* and stroked his luxuriant

moustache. Every now and then the sovereign bowed in acknowledgment of the good wishes paid him, and his bow was repeated by the crowd below in the court. After the Kajars came the Mullahs. Again another recitation of poetry, again more bows, more *kalian* smoking. Then foreign generals stood before the window, and native officers, Court servants and eunuchs. The *défilé* of troops, colleges, merchant associations and schools came next, and was very interesting.

Persian Cossacks in their nice long white uniforms and formidable chest ornamentations ; bandsmen with tin helmets and linoleum top boots ; hussars with plenty of braiding on cotton coats and trousers ; infantrymen, artillerymen, military cadets,—all were reviewed in turn by his Majesty, who displayed his royal satisfaction by an occasional bow.

There were no shrieks of enthusiasm, no applause, no hurrahs, as they went, but they all walked past the royal window in a quiet, dignified way—no easy matter, considering the extraordinary clothing that some were made to wear. One had a sort of suspicion that, not unlike the armies marching on the stage, one recognised the same contingents marching past several times to make up for numbers, but that did not take away from the picturesqueness of the scene, in the really beautiful garden, with lovely fountains spouting and flowers in full bloom.

The procession with banners and music went on for a very long time, but at last the

garden was cleared of all people. His Majesty wished to descend for a little walk.

Absolutely alone, the Shah sauntered about, apparently quite relieved that the ordeal was over. The Atabeg Azam was signalled to approach, and Prime Minister and Sovereign had a friendly conversation.

Although personally not fond of jewellery, I must confess that I was much impressed by the resplendent beauty of the Shah's diamonds when a ray of sun shone upon them. His chest and the aigrette on the cap were a blaze of dazzling light, with a myriad of most beautiful flashing colours.

The great social excitement of the year in Teheran was the Prime Minister's evening party on the Shah's birthday, when all the higher Persian officials were invited, and nearly all the Europeans resident in Teheran, regardless of their grade or social position.

This evening party was preceded by an official dinner to the members of the Legations. Elaborate fireworks were let off in the beautiful gardens and reflected in the ponds in front of the house, and the gardens were tastefully illuminated with vari-coloured lanterns and decorated with flags.

The house itself was full of interesting objects of art, and had spacious rooms in the best European style. Persian officials, resplendent in gold-braided uniforms, their chests a mass of decorations, were politeness itself to all guests. Excellent Persian bands, playing European airs, enlivened

the evening, and it was quite interesting to meet the rank and file and beauty of Teheran official and commercial life all here assembled. Persian ladies, naturally, did not appear, but a few Armenian ladies of the better classes were to be observed.

The gentle hint given to the guests to depart, when the Prime Minister got tired and wanted to retire, was quaintly clever. A soft music was heard to come from his bedroom. It was the signal. All hastened to make their best bows and departed.



THE SHAH IN HIS AUTOMOBILE.



CHAPTER XXII

The Shah's Palace—The finest court—Alabaster throne hall—A building in European style—The Museum—A chair of solid gold and silver—The *Atch*—Paintings—The banqueting room—The audience room—Beautiful carpets—An elaborate clock—Portraits of sovereigns and their places—Pianos and good music—The Jewelled-Globe room—Queen Victoria's photograph—Moving pictures—Conservatory—Roman mosaics—Toys—Adam and Eve—Royal and imperial oil paintings—A decided slight—The picture gallery—Valuable collection of arms—Strange paintings—Coins—Pearls—Printing press—Shah's country places.

ONE is told that one must not leave Teheran without carefully inspecting the Shah's Palace, its treasures and its museum. A special permit must be obtained for this through the Legation or the Foreign Office.

The first large court which I entered on this second visit has pretty tiled buildings at the sides, with its rectangular reservoir full of swans, and bordered by trees, is probably the most impressive part of the Palace. Fountains play in the centre, the spouts being cast-iron women's heads of the cheapest European kind.

The lofty throne hall stands at the end, its decorative curtains screening its otherwise unwalled frontage. For my special benefit the

curtains were raised, leaving exposed the two high spiral stone columns that support the roof in front. The bases of these columns bore conventionalized vases with sunflowers and leaf ornamentations, while the capitols were in three superposed fluted tiers, the uppermost being the largest in diameter. The frieze of the ceiling was concave, made of bits of looking-glass and gold, and the ceiling itself was also entirely composed of mirrors. The back was of shiny green and blue, with eight stars and two large looking-glasses, while at the sides there was a blue frieze.

Two large portraits of Nasr-ed-din Shah, two battle scenes and two portraits of Fath-Ali-Shah decorated the walls. The two side doors of the throne-hall were of beautifully inlaid wood, and the two doors directly behind the throne were of old Shiraz work with ivory inscriptions upon them in the centre. The lower part of the wall was of coloured alabaster, with flower ornaments and birds, principally hawks. There were also other less important pictures, two of which I was told represented Nadir and Mahmud Shah, and two unidentified.

High up in the back wall were five windows, of the usual Persian pattern, and also a cheap gold frame enclosing a large canvas that represented a half-naked figure of a woman with a number of fowls, a cat and a dog. Two gold *consoles* were the only heavy articles of movable furniture to be seen.

The spacious throne of well-marked yellow alabaster was quite gorgeous, and had two plat-

forms, the first, with a small fountain, being reached by three steps, the second a step higher. The platform was supported by demons, "guebre" figures all round, and columns resting on the backs of feline animals. On the upper platform was spread an ancient carpet.

On leaving this hall we entered a second court giving entrance to a building in the European style, with a wide staircase leading to several reception rooms on the first floor. One—the largest—had a billiard table in the centre, expensive furniture along the walls, and curtains of glaring yellow and red plush, the chairs being of the brightest blue velvet. Taken separately each article of furniture was of the very best kind, but it seemed evident that whoever furnished that room did his utmost to select colours that would not match.

There were two Parisian desks and a fine old oak inlaid desk, a capital inlaid bureau, manufactured by a Russian in Teheran, and some Sultanabad carpets not more than fifty years old. On the shelves and wherever else a place could be found stood glass decorations of questionable artistic taste, and many a vase with stiff bunches of hideous artificial flowers.

Let us enter the adjoining Museum, a huge room in five sections, as it were, each section having a huge chandelier of white and blue Austrian glass, suspended from the ceiling. There are glass cases all round crammed full of things arranged with no regard to their value, merit, shape, size, colour or origin. Beautiful Chinese and Japanese

cloisonné stands next to the cheapest Vienna plaster statuette representing an ugly child with huge spectacles on his nose, and the most exquisite Sèvres and other priceless ceramic ware is grouped with empty bottles and common glass restaurant decanters. In company with these will be a toy—a monkey automatically playing a fiddle.

Costly jade and cheap prints were together in another case ; copies of old paintings of saints and the Virgin, coloured photographs of theatrical and music-hall stars, and of picturesque scenery, a painting of the Shah taken in his apartments, jewels, gold ornaments inlaid with precious stones, a beautiful malachite set consisting of clock, inkstand, vases, and a pair of candlesticks ; meteoric stones and fossil shells—all were displayed in the utmost confusion along the shelves.

At the further end of the Museum, reached by three steps, was a gaudy throne chair of solid gold and silver enamelled. The throne had amphoras at the sides and a sunflower in diamonds behind it. The seat was of red brocade, and the chair had very small arms. It rested on a six-legged platform with two supports and two ugly candelabras.

A glance at the remaining glass cases of the museum reveals the same confusion ; everything smothered in dust, everything uncared for. One's eye detects at once a valuable set of china, and some lovely axes, pistols and swords inlaid in gold, ivory and silver. Then come busts of Bismarck and Moltke, a plaster clown, tawdry painted fans and tortoiseshell ones ; a set of the

most common blue table-service, and two high candelabras, green and white ; a leather dressing-bag with silver fittings (unused), automatic musical figures, shilling candlesticks, artificial coloured fruit in marble, and a really splendid silver dinner-service.

From the Museum we passed into the *Atch*, a kind of store-room, wherein were numberless cigar-boxes, wicker-work baskets, and badly-kept tiger skins. Here were photographs of some of the Shah's favourites, a great assortment of nut-crackers—the Persians love walnuts—cheap prints in profusion, and some good antelope-skins.

This led into the banqueting room, in the European style—and quite a good, sober style this time. The room was lighted by column candelabras, and there was a collection of the Shah's family portraits in medallions ; also a large-sized phonograph, which is said to afford much amusement to His Majesty and his guests.

The paintings on the walls ran very much to the nude, and none were very remarkable, if one excepts a life-size nude figure of a woman sitting and in the act of caressing a dove. It is a very clever copy of a painting by Foragne in the Shah's picture gallery, and has been done by a Persian artist named Kamaol-el-Mulk, who, I was told, had studied in Paris.

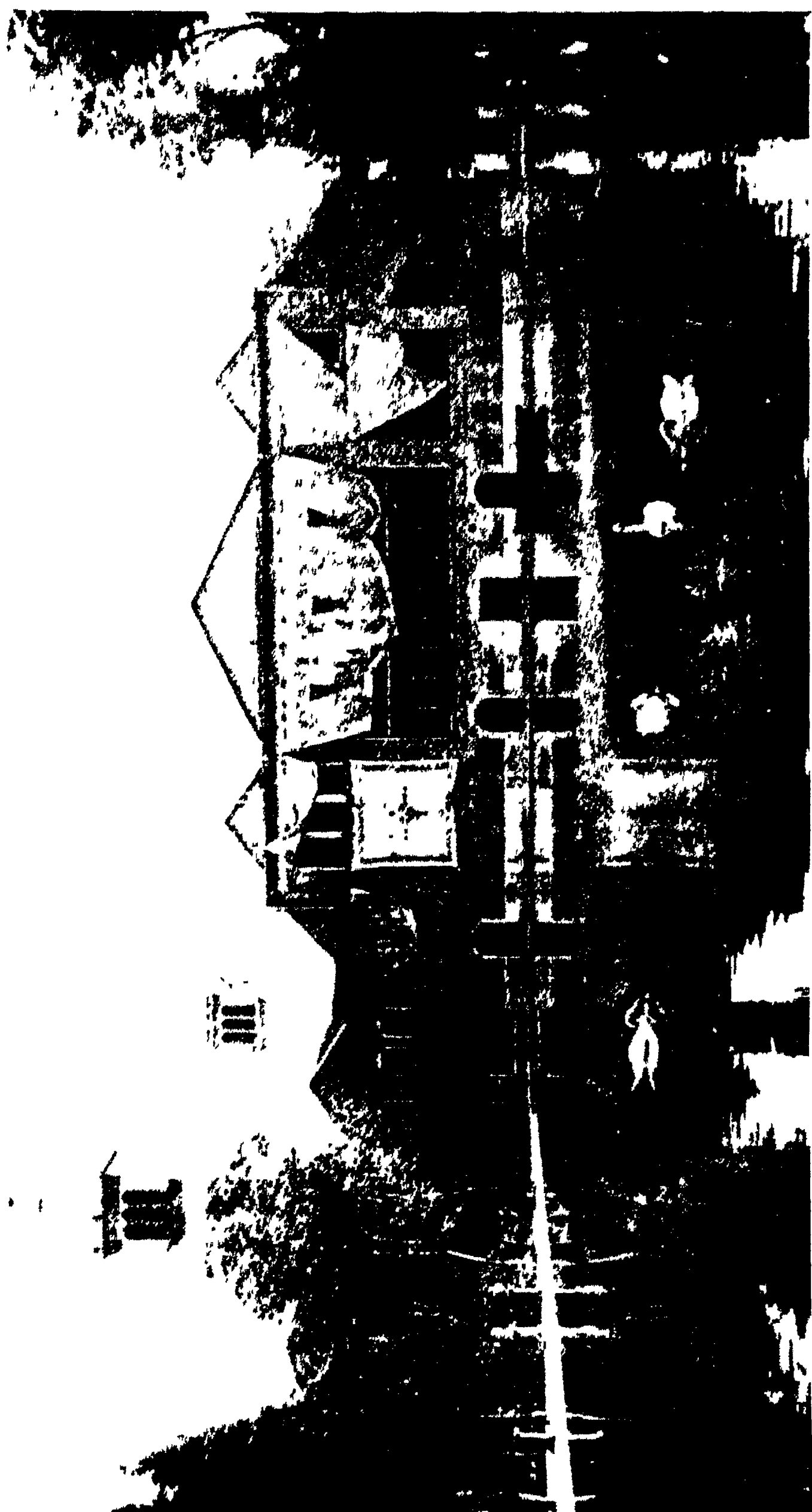
Most interesting of all in the room, however, was the exquisite old carpet with a delightful design of roses. It was the carpet that

Nasr-ed-din Shah brought to Europe with him to spread under his chair.

The dining-room bore evident signs of His Majesty's hasty departure for the country. On the tables were piled up anyhow mountains of dishes, plates, wine-glasses, and accessories, the table service made in Europe being in most excellent taste, white and gold with a small circle in which the Persian "Lion and Sun" were surmounted by the regal crown.

We go next into the Shah's favourite apartments, where he spends most of his time when in Teheran. We are now in the small room in which I had already been received in audience by his Majesty on his birthday, a room made entirely of mirrors. There was a low and luxurious red couch on the floor, and we trod on magnificent soft silk carpets of lovely designs. One could not resist feeling with one's fingers the deliciously soft Kerman rug of a fascinating artistic green, and a charming red carpet from Sultanabad. The others came from Isfahan and Kashan. The most valuable and beautiful of all, however, was the white rug, made in Sultanabad, on which the Shah stands when receiving in audience.

Next after the carpets, a large clock by Benson with no less than thirteen different dials, which told one at a glance the year, the month, the week, the day, the moon, the hour, minutes, seconds, and anything else one might wish to know, was perhaps the most noticeable item in the Shah's room.



IN THE SHAH'S PALACE GROUNDS, TEHERAN.

There was nothing in the furniture to appeal to one, the chairs and tables being of cheap bamboo of the familiar folding pattern such as are commonly characteristic of superior boarding-houses. In the way of art there was a large figure of a woman resting under a palm tree, a photographic enlargement of the Shah's portrait, and on the Shah's writing-desk two handsome portraits of the Emperor and Empress of Russia, the Emperor occupying the highest place of honour. Two smaller photographs of the Czar and Czarina were to be seen also in shilling plush frames on another writing-desk, by the side of an electric clock and night-light.

The eye was attracted by three terrestrial globes and an astronomical one with constellations standing on a table. A number of very tawdry articles were lying about on the other pieces of furniture; such were a metal dog holding a ten-shilling watch, paper frames, cheap imitation leather articles, numerous photographs of the Shah, a copy of the *Petit Journal* framed, and containing a representation of the attempt on the Shah's life, an amber service, and last, but not least, the nut-cracker and the empty nutshells, the contents of which the Shah was in process of eating when I had an audience of him some days before, still lying undisturbed upon a small desk. The Shah's special chair was embroidered in red and blue.

All this was reflected myriads of times in the diamond-shaped mirror ceiling and walls, and the effect was somewhat dazzling. The room

had a partition, and on the other side was an ample couch for his Majesty to rest upon. In each reception room is to be seen a splendid grand piano, the music of which, when good, the Shah is said passionately to enjoy. One of his aides de camp—a European—is an excellent pianist and composer.

We now come to the world-renowned “Jewelled-Globe” room, and of course one makes at once for the priceless globe enclosed in a glass case in the centre of the room. The frame of the large globe is said to be of solid gold and so is the tripod stand, set in rubies and diamonds. The Globe, to do justice to its name, is covered all over with precious stones, the sea being represented by green emeralds, and the continents by rubies. The Equator line is set in diamonds and also the whole area of Persian territory.

There is nothing else of great artistic interest here, and it depressed one to find that, although the portraits in oil and photographs of the Emperors of Russia and Austria occupied prominent places of honour in the Shah’s apartments, the only image of our Queen Victoria was a wretched faded cabinet photograph in a twopenny paper frame, thrown carelessly among empty envelopes and writing paper in a corner of his Majesty’s writing desk. Princess Beatrice’s photograph was near it, and towering above them in the most prominent place was another picture of the Emperor of Russia. We, ourselves, may attach little meaning to these trifling details,

but significant are the inferences drawn by the natives themselves.

In this room, as in most of the others, there is Bohemian glass in great profusion, and a "one year chronometer" of great precision. A really beautiful inlaid ivory table is disfigured by a menagerie of coloured miniature leaden cats, lions, lizards, dogs, a children's kaleidoscope, and some badly-stuffed birds, singing automatically. On another table were more glass vases and a variety of articles made of cockle shells on pasteboard, cycle watches, and brass rings with imitation stones.

Adjoining this room is a small boudoir, possessing the latest appliances of civilisation. It contains another grand piano, a large apparatus for projecting moving pictures on a screen, and an ice-cream soda fountain with four taps, of the type one admires—but does not wish to possess—in the New York chemists' shops!! The Shah's, however, lacks three things,—the soda, the ice, and the syrups!

Less modern but more reposeful is the next ante-room with white walls and pretty wood ceiling. It has some military pictures of no great value.

On going down ten steps we find ourselves in a long conservatory with blue and yellow tiles and a semi-open roof. A channel of water runs in the centre of the floor, and is the outlet of three octagonal basins and of spouts at intervals of ten feet. There is a profusion of lemon and orange trees at the sides of the water, and the place is kept deliciously cool.

Here we emerge again into the gardens, which are really beautiful although rather overcrowded, but which have plenty of fountains and huge tanks, with handsome buildings-reflected into the water.

The high tiled square towers, one of the landmarks of Teheran, are quite picturesque, but some of the pleasure of looking at the really fine view is destroyed by numerous ugly cast-iron coloured figures imported from Austria which disfigure the sides of all the reservoirs, and are quite out of keeping with the character of everything round them.

We are now conducted into another building, where Roman mosaics occupy a leading position, a large one of the Coliseum being quite a valuable work of art; but on entering the second room we are suddenly confronted by a collection of hideous tin ware and a specimen case of ordinary fish hooks, manufactured by Messrs. W. Bartlett and Sons. Next to this is a framed autograph of "Nina de Muller of St. Petersburg," and a photographic gathering of gay young ladies with suitable inscriptions—apparently some of the late Shah's acquaintances during his European tours. Here are also stuffed owls, an automatic juggler, an imitation snake, Japanese screens, and an amusing painting by a Persian artist of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden—the forbidden fruit already missing.

Previous to entering the largest room we come to an ante-room with photographs of scenery and events belonging to the Shah's tour to Europe.

In the large gold room the whole set of furniture, I am told, was presented to Nasr-ed-din Shah by the Sultan of Turkey, and there are, besides, six large oil-paintings hanging upon the walls in gorgeous gold frames. They represent the last two Shahs, the Emperor and Empress of Russia, the Crown Prince at the time of the presentation, and the Emperor of Austria. A smaller picture of Victor Emmanuel also occupies a prominent place, but here again we have another instance of the little reverence in which our beloved Queen Victoria was held in the eyes of the Persian Court. Among the various honoured foreign Emperors and Kings, to whom this room is dedicated, Queen Victoria's only representation is a small, bad photograph, skied in the least attractive part of the room—a most evident slight, when we find such photographs as that of the Emperor William occupying a front and honoured place, as does also the photograph of Queen Wilhelmina of Holland with her mother. Yet another palpable instance of this disregard for the reigning head of England appears in a series of painted heads of Sovereigns. The Shah, of course, is represented the biggest of the lot, and King Humbert, Emperor William, the Sultan of Turkey and the Emperor of Austria, of about equal sizes ; whereas the Queen of England is quite small and insignificant.

The furniture in this room is covered with the richest plush.

We now come upon the royal picture gallery (or, rather, gallery of painted canvases), a long,

long room, where a most interesting display of Persian, Afghan, Beluch and Turkish arms of all kinds, ancient and modern, gold bows and arrows, jewelled daggers, Damascus swords, are much more attractive than the yards of portraits of ladies who have dispensed altogether with dressmakers' bills, and the gorgeously framed advertisements of Brooks' Machine Cottons, and other products, which are hung on the line in the picture gallery ! The pictures by Persian art students—who paint in European style—are rather quaint on account of the subjects chosen when they attempt to be ideal. They run a good deal to the fantastic, as in the case of the several square yards of canvas entitled the "Result of a dream." It contains quite a menagerie of most suggestive wild animals, and dozens of angels and demons in friendly intercourse playing upon the surface of a lake and among the entangled branches of trees. In the background a pyrotechnic display of great magnitude is depicted, with rockets shooting up in all directions, while ethereal, large, black-eyed women lie gracefully reclining and unconcerned, upon most unsafe clouds. The result on the spectator of looking at the "Result of a dream," and other similar canvases by the same artist, is generally, I should think, a nightmare.

There are some good paintings by foreign artists, such as the life-size nude with a dove by Folagne, which we have already seen, most faithfully and cleverly copied by a Persian artist, in the Shah's dining-room. Then there are some

pretty Dutch and Italian pictures, but nothing really first-rate in a purely artistic sense.

The cases of ancient and rare gold and silver coins are, however, indeed worthy of remark, and so are the really beautiful Persian, Afghan and Turkish gold and silver inlaid shields, and the intensely picturesque and finely ornamented matchlocks and flintlocks. Here, too, as in China, we find an abnormally large rifle—something like the *gingal* of the Celestials. These long clumsy rifles possess an ingenious back sight, with tiny perforations at different heights of the sight for the various distances on exactly the principle of a Lyman back sight.

The Persians who accompanied me through the Palace seemed very much astonished—almost concerned—at my taking so much interest in these weapons—which they said were only very old and obsolete—and so little in the hideous things which they valued and wanted me to admire. They were most anxious that I should stop before a box of pearls, a lot of them, all of good size but not very regular in shape. Anything worth big sums of money is ever much more attractive to Persians (also, one might add, to most Europeans) than are objects really artistic or even pleasing to the eye.

Next to the pearls, came dilapidated butterflies and shells and fossils and stuffed lizards and crocodiles and elephants' tusks, and I do not know what else, so that by the time one came out, after passing through the confusion that reigned everywhere, one's brain was so worn and

jumpy that one was glad to sit and rest in the lovely garden and sip cup after cup of tea, which the Palace servants had been good enough to prepare.

But there was one more thing that I was dragged to see before departing—a modern printing-press complete. His Majesty, when the fancy takes him, has books translated and specially printed for his own use. With a sigh of relief I was glad to learn that I had now seen everything, quite everything, in the Shah's Palace!

The Shah has several country seats with beautiful gardens on the hills to the north of Teheran, where he spends most of the summer months, and in these residences, too, we find the rooms mostly decorated with mirrors, and differing very little in character from those in the Teheran Palace, only not quite so elaborate. European influence has frequently crept in in architectural details and interior decorations, but not always advantageously.

The Andarun or harem, the women's quarter, is generally less gaudy than the other buildings, the separate little apartments belonging to each lady being, in fact, quite modest and not always particularly clean. There is very little furniture in the bedrooms, Persian women having comparatively few requirements. There is in addition a large reception room, furnished in European style, with elaborate coloured glass windows. This room is used when the Shah visits the ladies, or when they entertain friends, but there

is nothing, it may be noted, to impress one with the idea that these are regal residences or with that truly oriental, gorgeous pomp, popularly associated in Europe with the Shah's court. There is probably no court of any importance where the style of life is simpler and more modest than at the Shah's. All the houses are, nevertheless, most comfortable, and the gardens—the principal feature of all these country places—extremely handsome, with many fountains, tanks, and water channels intersecting them in every direction for the purpose of stimulating the artificially reared vegetation, and also of rendering the places cooler in summer.

Unlike most natives of the Asiatic continent, the Persian shows no reluctance in accepting foreign ways and inventions. He may lack the means to indulge in foreign luxuries, but that is a different matter altogether; the inclination to reform and adopt European ways is there all the same.

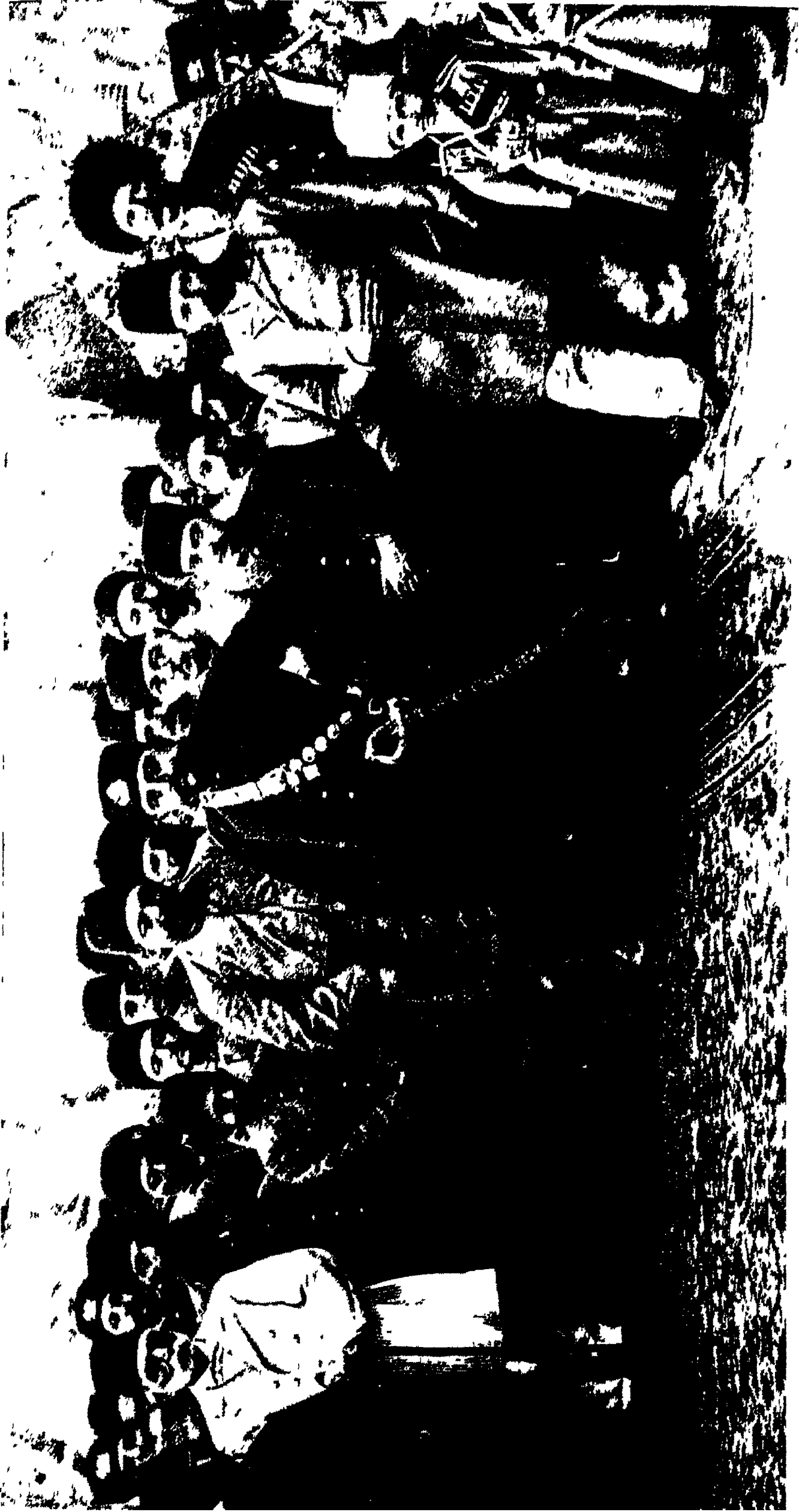
More forward in this line than most other Persians is the Shah's son, a very intelligent, bright young fellow, extremely plucky and charmingly simple-minded. He takes the keenest interest in the latest inventions and fads, and, like his father the Shah, fell a victim to the motor car mania. Only, the Shah entrusts his life to the hands of an expert French driver, whereas the young Prince finds it more amusing to drive the machine himself. This, of course, he can only do within the Palace grounds, since to do so in the streets of the town would be

considered below his dignity and would shock the people.

At the country residences he is said to have a good deal of amusement out of his motor, but not so the Shah's Ministers and friends who are now terrified at the name "motor." The young Prince, it appears, on the machine being delivered from Europe insisted—without previous knowledge of how to steer it—on driving it round a large water tank. He invited several stout Ministers in all their finery to accompany him, which they did with beaming faces, overcome by the honour. The machine started full speed ahead in a somewhat snake-like fashion, and with great destruction of the minor plants on the way; then came a moment of fearful apprehension on the part of spectators and performers alike. The car collided violently with an old tree; some of the high dignitaries were flung into the water, others though still on dry land lay flat on their backs.

It speaks volumes for the young Prince's pluck that, when the car was patched up, he insisted on driving it again; but the number of excuses and sudden complaints that have since prevailed among his father's friends when asked to go for a drive with the Prince are said to be quite unprecedented.

The Prince is a great sportsman and much beloved by all for his frankness and geniality.



THE SHAH AND HIS SUIT.
Prime Minister,

General Kossakowski,

CHAPTER XXIII

The selection of a servant—A Persian *diligence*—Shah-Abdul-Azim mosque—Rock carving—The round tower—Beggars—The *Kerjawa*—Hasanabad—Run-away horses—Misplaced affection—Characteristics of the country—Azizawad—Salt lake of Daria-i-Nimak—Aliabad—Sunsets.

I HAD much difficulty in obtaining a really first-class servant, although many applied with glowing certificates. It has always been my experience that the more glowing the certificates the worse the servant. For my particular kind of travelling, too, a special type of servant has to be got, with a constitution somewhat above the average. I generally cover very great distances at a high speed without the least inconvenience to myself, but I find that those who accompany me nearly always break down.

After inspecting a number of applicants I fixed upon one man whose features showed firmness of character and unusual determination. He was a man of few words—one of the rarest and best qualities in a travelling servant, and—he had no relations dependent upon him—the next best quality. He could shoot straight, he could stick on a saddle, he could walk. He

required little sleep. He was willing to go to any country where I chose to take him. He required a high salary, but promised by all he held most sacred that he would die before he would give me the slightest trouble. This seemed all fair, and I employed him.

Only one drawback did this man have—he was an excellent European cook. I had to modify him into a good plain cook, and then he became perfection itself. His name was Sadek.

On October 2nd I was ready to start south. My foot was still in a bad condition, but I thought that the open air cure would be the best instead of lying in stuffy rooms. Riding is my favourite way of progression, but again it was necessary to submit to another extortion and travel by carriage as far as Kum on a road made by the Bank of Persia some few years ago. The speculation was not carried on sufficiently long to become a success, and the road was eventually sold to a Persian concern. The same company runs a service of carriages with relays of horses between the two places, and if one wishes to travel fast one is compelled to hire a carriage, the horses not being let out on hire for riding purposes at any of the stations.

This time I hired a large diligence—the only vehicle in the stables that seemed strong enough to stand the journey. It was painted bright yellow outside, had no windows, and was very properly divided into two compartments, one for men and one for women. The money for the journey had to be paid in advance, and the

vehicle was ordered to be at the door of the hotel on Friday, October 4th, at 5.30 a.m.

It arrived on Sunday evening, October 6th, at 6.30 o'clock. So much for Persian punctuality. Sadek said I was lucky that it did come so soon ; sometimes the carriages ordered come a week later than the appointed time ; occasionally they do not come at all !

Sadek, much to his disgust, was made to occupy the ladies' compartment with all the luggage, and I had the men's. We were off, and left the city just in time before the South Gate was closed. There were high hills to the south-east, much broken and rugged, and to the north beyond the town the higher ones above Golahek, on which snow caps could be perceived. Damovend (18,600 ft.), the highest and most graceful mountain in Persia, stood with its white summit against the sky to the north-east.

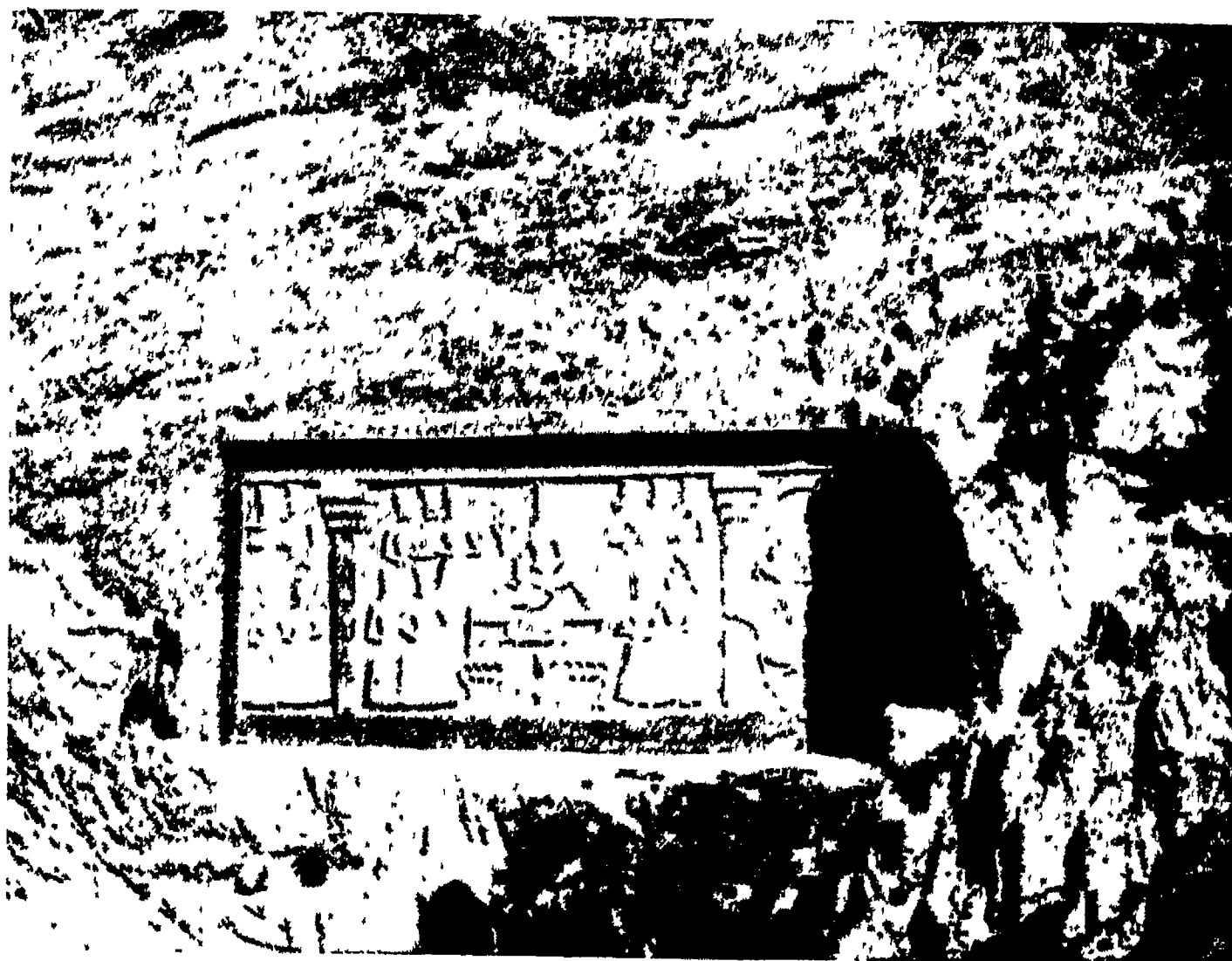
Even two hundred yards away from the city gate there was nothing to tell us that we had come out of the capital of Persia—the place looks so insignificant from every side. A green-tiled dome of no impressive proportions, a minaret or two, and a few mud walls—that is all one sees of the mass of houses one leaves behind.

Barren country and dusty road, a graveyard with its prism-shaped graves half-buried in sand, are the attractions of the road. One comes to an avenue of trees. Poor trees ! How baked and dried and smothered in dust ! A couple of miles off, we reached a patch of verdure and

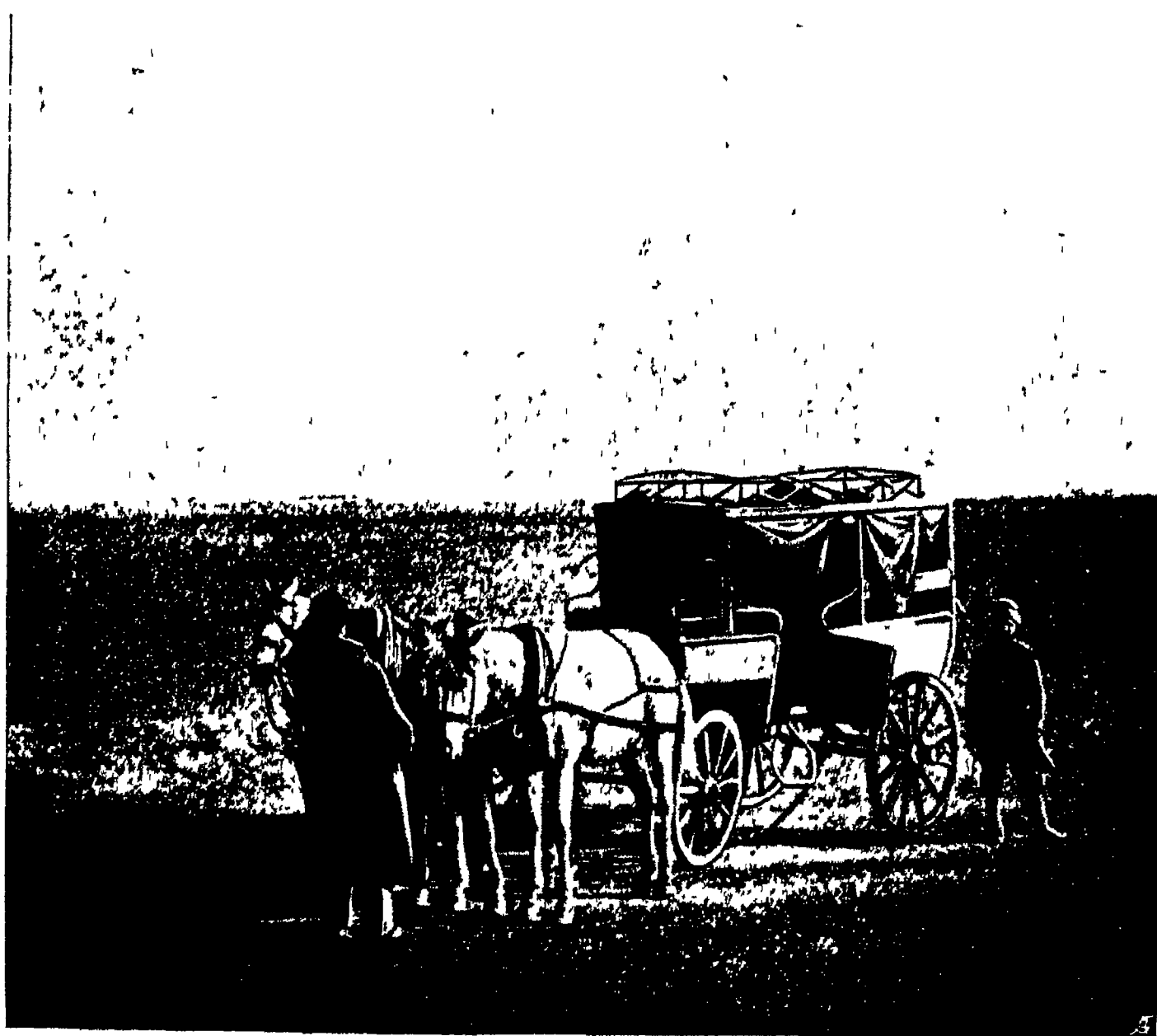
some really green trees and even signs of agriculture. To our left (east) lay the narrow-gauge railway line—the only one in Persia—leading to the Shah-Abdul Azim mosque. The whole length of the railway is not more than six miles.

To the right of the road, some little distance before reaching the mosque, a very quaint, large high-relief has been sculptured on the face of a huge rock and is reflected upside down in a pond of water at its foot. Men were bathing here in long red or blue drawers, and hundreds of donkeys were conveying veiled women to this spot. An enormous tree casts its shadow over the pool of water in the forenoon.

It is interesting to climb up to the high-relief to examine the figures more closely. The whole sculpture is divided into three sections separated by columns, the central section being as large as the two side ones taken together. In the centre is Fath-ali-shah—legless apparently—but supposed to be seated on a throne. He wears a high cap with three aigrettes, and his moustache and beard are of abnormal length. In his belt at the pinched waist he disports a sword and dagger, while he holds a bâton in his hand. There are nine figures to his right in two rows: the Naib Sultaneh, Hussein Ali, Taghi Mirza, above; below, Mahommed, Ali Mirza, Fatali Mirza, Abdullah Mirza, Bachme Mirza, one figure unidentified. To the Shah's left the figures of Ali-naghi Mirza and Veri Mirza are in the lower row; Malek Mirza, the last figure to the



ROCK SCULPTURE NEAR SHAH-ABDUL-AZIM.



left, Hedar Mirza and Moh-Allah-Mirza next to Fath-Ali-Shah. All the figures are long-bearded and garbed in long gowns, with swords and daggers. On Fath-Ali-Shah's right hand is perched a hawk, and behind his throne stands an attendant with a sunshade, while under the seat are little figures of Muchul Mirza and Kameron Mirza. There are inscriptions on the three sides of the frame, but not on the base. A seat is carved in the rock by the side of the sculpture.

A few hundred yards from this well-preserved rock carving, a round tower 90 or 100 feet in height has been erected. Its diameter inside is about 40 feet and the thickness of the wall about 20 feet. It has two large yellow doors. Why this purposeless structure was put up, nobody seems to know for certain. One gets a beautiful view from the top of the wall—Teheran in the distance on one side ; the Shah-Abdul-Azim mosque on the other. Mountains are close by to the east, and a patch of cultivation and a garden all round down below. Near the mosque—as is the case with all pilgrimage places in Persia—we find a bazaar crammed with beggars, black bag-like women riding astride on donkeys or mules, depraved-looking men, and stolid-looking Mullahs. There were old men, blind men, lame men, deaf men, armless men, men with enormous tumours, others minus the nose or lower jaw—the result of cancer. Millions of flies were buzzing about.

One of the most ghastly deformities I have ever seen was a tumour under a Mullah's foot.

It was an almost spherical tumour, some three inches in diameter, with skin drawn tight and shining over its surface. It had patches of red on the otherwise whitish-yellow skin, and gave the impression of the man resting his foot on an unripe water-melon with the toes half dug into the tumour.

Non-Mussulmans are, of course, forbidden to enter the mosque, so I had to be content with the outside view of it—nothing very grand—and must take my reader again along the flat, uninteresting country towards Kum.

The usual troubles of semi-civilised Persia are not lacking even at the very first stage. There are no relays of horses, and those just unharnessed are too tired to proceed. They are very hungry, too, and there is nothing for them to eat. Several hours are wasted, and Sadek employs them in cooking my dinner and also in giving exhibitions of his temper to the stable people. Then follow endless discussions at the top of their voices, in which I do not take part, for I am old and wise enough not to discuss anything with anybody.

The prospects of a backshish, the entreaties and prayers being of no avail, Sadek flies into a fury, rushes to the yard, seizes the horses and harness, gives the coachman a hammering (and the post master very nearly another), and so we are able to start peacefully again at three a.m., and leave Chah-herizek behind.

But the horses are tired and hungry. They drag and stumble along in a most tiresome

manner. There is moonlight, that ought to add poetry to the scenery—but in Persia there is no poetry about anything. There are a great many caravans on the road—they all travel at night to save the animals from the great heat of the day—long strings of camels with their monotonous bells, and dozens of donkeys or mules, some with the covered double litters—the *kerjawa*. These *kerjawas* are comfortable enough for people not accustomed to ride, or for women who can sleep comfortably while in motion inside the small panier. The *kerjawa* is slung over the saddle like two large hampers with a roof of bent bands of wood. A cloth covering is made to turn the *kerjawa* into a small private room, an exact duplicate of which is slung on the opposite side of the saddle. Two persons balancing each other are required by this double arrangement, or one person on one side and an equivalent quantity of luggage on the other so as to establish a complete balance—a most important point to consider if serious accidents are to be avoided.

Every now and then the sleepy voice of a caravan man calls out “Salameleko” to my coachman, and “Salameleko” is duly answered back ; otherwise we rattle along at the speed of about four miles an hour, bumping terribly on the uneven road, and the diligence creaking in a most perplexing manner.

At Hasanabad, the second stage, I was more fortunate and got four good horses in exchange for the tired ones. One of them was very fresh and positively refused to go with the others,

The driver, who was brutal, used his stock-whip very freely, with the result that the horse smashed part of the harness and bolted. The other three, of course, did the same, and the coachman was not able to hold them. We travelled some few hundred yards off the road at a considerable speed and with terrible bumping, the shaky, patched-up carriage gradually beginning to crumble to pieces. The boards of the front part fell apart, owing to the violent oscillations of the roof, and the roof itself showed evident signs of an approaching collapse. We were going down a steep incline, and I cannot say that I felt particularly happy until the horses were got under control again. I feared that all my photographic plates and cameras might get damaged if the diligence turned over.

While the men mended the harness I had a look at the scenery. The formation of the country was curious. There were what at first appeared to be hundreds of small mounds like ant-hills—round topped and greyish, or in patches of light brown, with yellow sand deposits exposed to the air on the surface. On getting nearer they appeared to be long flat-topped ridges evidently formed by water-borne matter—probably at the epoch when this was the sea or lake bottom.

“*Khup es!*” (It is all right!) said the coachman, inviting me to mount again—and in a sudden outburst of exuberant affection he embraced the naughty horse and kissed him

fondly on the nose. The animal reciprocated the coachman's compliment by promptly kicking the front splashboard of the carriage to smithereens.

We crossed a bridge. To the east the water-level mark, made when this valley was under water, is plainly visible on the strata of gravel with reddish mud above, of which the hills are formed.

Then, rising gradually, the diligence goes over a low pass and along a flat plateau separating the first basin we have left behind from a second, more extensive, of similar formation. The hills in this second basin appear lower. To the S.S.E. is a horseshoe-shaped sand dune, much higher than anything we had so far encountered, and beyond it a range of mountains. Salt can be seen mixed with the pale-brownish mud of the soil.

Then we drive across a third basin, large and flat, with the scattered hills getting lower and seemingly worn by the action of weather. They are not so corrugated by water-formed channels as the previous ones we had passed. Twenty feet or so below the summit of the hills a white sediment of salt showed itself plainly.

The fourth basin is at a higher level than the others—some 100 feet or so above the third—and is absolutely flat, with dark, gravelly soil.

Azizawad village has no special attraction beyond the protecting wall that encloses it—like all villages of Persia—and the domed roofs

of houses to which one begins to get reconciled. Next to it is the very handsome fruit garden of Khale-es-Sultan.

At Khale Mandelha the horses are changed. The road becomes very undulating, with continuous ups and downs, and occasional steep ascents and descents. Glimpses of the large salt lake, Daria-i-Nimak, or the Masileh, as it is also called, are obtained, and eventually we had quite a pretty view with high blue mountains in the background and rocky black mounds between the spectator and the silvery sheet of water.

Aliabad has a large caravanserai with a red-columned portico to the east ; also a special place for the Sadrazam, the Prime Minister, when travelling on this road ; a garden with a few sickly trees, and that is all.

On leaving the caravanserai one skirts the mountain side to the west, and goes up it to the horse station situated in a most desolate spot. From this point one gets a bird's-eye view of the whole lake. Its waters, owing to evaporation, seem to withdraw, leaving a white sediment of salt along the edge. The road from the Khafe-khana runs now in a perfectly straight line S.W., and, with the exception of the first short incline, is afterwards quite flat, passing along and very little above the lake shore, from which the road is about one mile distant. The lake is to the S.E. of the road at this point. To the S.W., W., N.W., N., lies a long row of dark-brown hills which circle round the valley we are about to cross.

The sunset on that particular night was one in which an amateur painter would have revelled. A dirty-brown foreground as flat as a billiard-table—a sharp cutting edge of blue hill-tops against a bilious lemon-yellow sky blending into a ghastly cinabrese red, which gradually vanished into a sort of lead blue. There are few countries where the sun appears and disappears above and from the earth's surface with less glow than in Persia. Of course, the lack of moisture in the atmosphere largely accounts for this. During the several months I was in the country—though for all I know this may have been my misfortune only—I never saw more than half a dozen sunsets that were really worth intense admiration, and these were not in Western Persia. The usual sunsets are effects of a washed-out sort, with no force and no beautiful contrasts of lights and colours such as one sees in Egypt, in Morocco, in Spain, Italy, or even, with some amount of toning down, in our little England.

The twilight in Persia is extremely short.

CHAPTER XXIV

Severe wind—Kum, the holy city—Thousands of graves—
Conservative Mullahs—Ruin and decay—Leather tanning
—The gilt dome—Another extortion—Ingenious bellows
—Damovend—The scenery—Passangun—Evening prayers
—A contrivance for setting charcoal alight—Putrid water—
Post horses—Sin Sin—Mirage—Nassirabad—Villages near
Kashan.

ON a deserted road, sleepy and shaken, with the wind blowing so hard that it tore and carried away all the cotton curtains of the carriage, I arrived at Kum (3,200 feet above sea level) in the middle of the night. The distance covered between Teheran and Kum was twenty-four farsakhs, or ninety-six miles.

As we approached the holy city there appeared to be a lot of vegetation around, and Sadek and the coachman assured me that this was a region where pomegranates were grown in profusion, and the castor-oil plant, too. Cotton was, moreover, cultivated with success.

Kum is, to my mind, and apart from its holiness, one of the few really picturesque cities of Persia. I caught the first panoramic glimpse of the shrine and mosque at sunrise from the roof of the post house, and was much impressed

by its grandeur. Amidst a mass of semi-spherical mud roofs, and beyond long mud walls, rise the gigantic gilded dome of the mosque, two high minarets, and two shorter ones with most beautifully coloured tiles inlaid upon their walls, the general effect of which is of most delicate greys, blues and greens. Then clusters of fruit trees, numerous little minarets all over the place, and ventilating shafts above the better buildings break the monotony agreeably.

Kum, I need hardly mention, is one of the great pilgrimages of Mahommedans. Happy dies the man or woman whose body will be laid at rest near the sacred shrine, wherein—it is said—lie the remains of Matsuma Fatima. Corpses are conveyed here from all parts of the country. Even kings and royal personages are buried in the immediate neighbourhood of the shrine. Round the city there are thousands of mud graves, which give quite a mournful appearance to the holy city. There are almost as many dead people as living ones in Kum !

Innumerable Mullahs are found here who are very conservative, and who seem to resent the presence of European visitors in the city. Access to the shrine is absolutely forbidden to foreigners.

Immense sums of money are brought daily to the holy city by credulous pilgrims, but no outward signs of a prosperous trade nor of fine streets or handsome private buildings can be detected on inspecting the bazaar or streets of the town. On the contrary, the greater part of

the residences are in a hopeless state of decay, and the majority of the inhabitants, to all appearance, little above begging point.

Leather, tanned with the bark of the pomegranate, and cheap pottery are the chief industries of the holy city. On inquiring what becomes of all the wealth that comes into the town, a Persian, with a significant gesture, informed me that the Mullahs get it and with them it remains.

The handsome dome over the shrine was begun by order of Hussein Nadir Shah, but the gorgeous gilding of the copper plates was not finished till a few years ago by Nasr-ed-din Shah. A theological college also exists at this place. There is a station here of the Indo-European Telegraphs, with an Armenian in charge of it.

Much to my disgust, I was informed that the owner of the post-house had the monopoly of the traffic on the track for six or seven farsakhs more, and so travellers were compelled to submit to a further extortion by having to hire another wheeled conveyance instead of being able to ride. This time I chartered a victoria, and off we went as usual at a gallop.

Two horses had to be sent ahead while the carriage was driven with only two animals through the narrow streets of the bazaar, covered over with awnings or with domed perforated roofs. The place had a tawdry, miserable appearance, the leather shops being the only interesting ones, with the many elaborate saddles,

harness, saddle-bags, and horses' ornamentations displayed on nails along the walls.

I saw in a blacksmith's shop an ingenious device to create a perpetual draught with bellows. The big bellows were double and allowed sufficient room to let two boys stand between the two. The boys clinging to handles in the upper part of the bellows and using the weight of their bodies now to the right, then to the left, inflated first one then the other, the wind of each bellow passing through a common end tube and each being in turn refilled with air while the other was blowing. This human pendulum arrangement was carried on with incredible rapidity by the two boys, who dashed their bodies from one side to the other and back, keeping steady time and holding their feet stationary, but describing an almost complete semicircle with the remainder of the body, the whole length of the boy forming the radius.

There was a shop or two where glass was being blown, and numerous fruit-shops with mountains of pomegranates, water-melons and grapes. At the entrance of the mosques crowds of people stood waiting for admission, some praying outside.

Once out of the town the extra two horses, which were waiting at the gate, were harnessed, and as we sped along, the lungs rejoiced in the pure air of which the stuffy, cellar-like bazaar had afforded none.

Behind, in the far distance, Damovend

Mountain, covered with snow, could still be seen rising high above everything. It was undoubtedly a good-looking mountain. To the south-west and west lay indented hills of the most curious shapes and colours—one, particularly, like a roof, with a greenish base surmounted by a raw-sienna top; a twin-sister hill further west presented the same peculiarities. In the distant mountains to the west the same characteristics were apparent, the greenish stratum below extending all along and increasing in depth towards the south.

The road—if one may call it so—was extremely bad and hardly fit for wheeled traffic. After leaving Kum the vegetation ceased, and it was only at Langherut village that a patch of green refreshed the eye.

A few strolling wayfarers crowded round when the carriage stopped to give the horses a rest under the shade of a tree, and Sadek was cross-examined about the Sahib whom he was accompanying. It was quite amusing to hear one's self and one's doings commented upon in the most open manner, regardless of one's personal feelings, which are better discarded altogether while travelling in Persia. There is absolutely nothing private in the land of Iran. One's appearance, one's clothes, the quantity of food one eats, the amount of money one carries, where one comes from and where one goes, whom one knows, one's servants, one's rifles, one's cameras,—everything is remarked upon, as if one were not present. If one possesses no

false pride and a sense of humour, a deal of entertainment is thus provided on the road.

Passangun could be perceived in the distance, and a dreary, desolate place it was when one got there. In the way of architecture, we found a large tumbling-down caravanserai, a tea-shop, and the Chappar Khana (the post-house). As to vegetation, thirteen sickly trees, all counted. Barren, uninteresting country surrounded the halting place.

I spent here a pleasant hour while waiting for my luggage to arrive on pack animals. A caravan of some fifty horses and mules had halted at sunset, and a number of pilgrims, with beards dyed bright-red, were making their evening salaams towards Mecca. Having removed shoes and duly washed their feet and hands, they stood erect on the projecting platform of the caravanserai, and after considerable adjusting of caps and head-scratching, assumed a meditative attitude, head bent forward, and muttered prayers with hands down. Then the hands were raised flat before the face, with a bow. Kneeling followed, with hands first resting on the knees, then raised again to cover the face, after which, with the palms of the hands resting flat on the ground, the head was brought down until it touched the ground too. A standing position was further assumed, when the temples were touched with the thumb while prayers were recited, and then the petitioners stooped low and fell a second time on their knees, saying the beads of their rosaries. The forehead

was made to touch the ground several times before the evening prayers were over.

Next, food was cooked in the small fire places of the caravanserai, and tea brewed in large quantities. The inevitable kalian was called for, and the caravanserai boy brought out his interesting little arrangement to set charcoal quickly alight for the large cup of the kalian. To a string three feet long, hung a small perforated iron cup, which he filled with charcoal, one tiny bit being already alight. By quickly revolving the contrivance as one would a sling, the draught forced through the apertures in the cup produced quick combustion, and charcoal was at once distributed alight among the kalians of the impatient guests.

Much amusement and excitement was caused among the pilgrims by a fight between a puppy-dog and five or six small goats. Only one of these at a time fought the dog, while the others occupied a high point of vantage on which they had hastily climbed, and from that place of security displayed a keen interest in the fight.

The water at Passangun was extremely bad. There were two tanks of rain water drained from the hillside along a dirty channel filled with animal refuse. The wells were below the ground level, and were walled and domed over to prevent too rapid an evaporation by the sun's rays. The water was pestilential. It had a nasty green look about it, and patches of putrid matter decomposing visibly on its surface. The stench from it when stirred was sickening. Yet the natives drank it and found it all right!

There is no accounting for people's taste, not even in Persia.

At last, from this point, the positive torture of driving in carriages was over, and *Chappar* horses were to be obtained. The saddles were got ready, and with five horses we made a start that same evening for Sin Sin. After the wretched bumping and thumping and being thrown about in the wheeled conveyance on the badly-kept road, it seemed heavenly to be ambling along at a fairly good pace, even on these poor, half-starved animals, which could not in all honesty be considered to afford perfect riding. Indeed, if there ever was a society for the prevention of cruelty to animals, it should have begun its work along the Persian postal roads. The poor brutes—one can hardly call them horses—are bony and starved, with sore backs, chests and legs, with a bleeding tongue almost cut in two and pitifully swollen by cruelly-shaped bits, and endowed with stinking digestive organs and other nauseous odours of uncared-for sores heated by the friction of never-removed, clumsy, heavy pads under the saddles. It requires a pretty strong stomach, I can tell you, to ride them at all. Yet the poor devils canter along, when they do not amble, and occasionally gallop clumsily on their unsteady, skeleton-like legs. So that, notwithstanding everything, one generally manages to go at the rate of six or seven miles an hour.

If the horses at the various post-stations have just returned from conveying the post-bags, an

extra sorry time is in store for the traveller. The poor animals are then so tired that they occasionally collapse on the road. I invariably used all the kindness I could to these wretches, but it was necessary for me to get on, as I intended to proceed in the greatest haste over the better known parts of Persia.

It is important to see the horses fed before starting from all the post-houses, but on many occasions no food whatever could be procured for them, when, of course, they had to go without it.

Changing horses about every 20 to 28 miles, and being on the saddle from fourteen to twenty hours out of the twenty-four, I was able to cover long distances, and kept up an average of from 80 to 120 miles daily. One can, of course, cover much greater distances than these in one day, if one is fortunate enough to get good and fresh horses at the various stations, and if one does not have to keep it up for a long period of time as I had to do.

From Sin Sin we go due south along a flat trail of salt and mud. We have a barrier of mountains to the south-west and higher mountains to the south. To the south-east also a low ridge with another higher behind it. To the north we leave behind low hills.

Sin Sin itself is renowned for its water-melons, and I, too, can humbly certify to their excellence. I took a load of them away for the journey.

From here we began to see the wonderful effects of deceitful mirage, extremely common

all over Persia. One sees beautiful lakes of silvery water, with clusters of trees and islands and rocks duly reflected upside down in their steady waters, but it is all an optical deception, caused by the action of the heated soil on the expanding air immediately in contact with it, which, seen from above and at a distance, is of a bluish white tint with exactly the appearance and the mirror-like qualities of still water.

Although in Central Persia one sees many of these effects every day, they are sometimes so marvellous that even the most experienced would be deceived.

The country is barren and desolate. Kasimabad has but two buildings, both caravanserais ; but Nassirabad, further on, is quite a large village, with domed roofs and a couple of minarets. On the road is a large caravanserai, with the usual alcoves all round its massive walls. Except the nice avenue of trees along a refreshing brook of limpid water, there was nothing to detain us here but the collision between one of my pack-horses and a mule of a passing caravan, with disastrous results to both animals' loads. But, with the assistance of one or two natives commandeered by Sadek, the luggage scattered upon the road was replaced high on the saddles, the fastening ropes were pulled tight by Sadek with his teeth and hands, while I took this opportunity to sit on the roadside to partake of my lunch—four boiled eggs, a cold roast chicken, Persian bread, some cake, and half a water-melon, the whole washed down

with a long drink of clear water. Riding at the rate I did, the whole day and the greater part of the night, in the hot sun and the cold winds at night, gave one a healthy appetite.

As we got nearer Kashan city, the villages got more numerous ; Aliabad and the Yaze (mosque) and Nushabad to my left (east), with its blue tiled roof of the mosque. But the villages were so very much alike and uninteresting in colour and in architecture, that a description of each would be unimportant and most tedious, so that I will only limit myself to describing the more typical and striking ones with special features that may interest the reader.

In the morning of October 9th I had reached the city of Kashan, seventeen farsakhs (sixty-eight miles) from Kum, and forty-one farsakhs or 164 miles from Teheran, in two days and a half including halts.

CHAPTER XXV

Kashan — Silk manufactories — Indo-European Telegraph — The Zein-ed-din tower — The Meh-rab shrine — The Madrassah Shah — The Panja Shah — The hand of Nazareth Abbas — The Fin Palace — Hot springs — The tragic end of an honest Prime Minister — Ice store-houses — Cultivation — In the bazaar — Brass work — Silk — The Mullahs and places of worship — Wretched post-horses — The Gyabrabad caravanserai — An imposing dam — Fruit-tree groves — Picturesque Kohrut village.

KASHAN, 3,260 feet above sea level, is famous for its gigantic and poisonous scorpions, for its unbearable heat, its capital silk works, and its copper utensils, which, if not always ornamental, are proclaimed everlasting. The silk manufactories are said to number over three hundred, including some that make silk carpets, of world-wide renown. The population is 75,000 souls or thereabouts. Nothing is ever certain in Persia. There are no hotels in the city, and it is considered undignified for Europeans to go to a caravanserai — of which there are some three dozen in Kashan — or to the Chappar Khana.

The Indo-European Telegraphs have a large two-storied building outside the north gate of the city, in charge of an Armenian clerk, where,

through the courtesy of the Director of Telegraphs, travellers are allowed to put up, and where the guests' room is nice and clean, with a useful bedstead, washstand, and a chair or two.

A capital view of Kashan is obtained from the roof of the Telegraph building. A wide road, the one by which I had arrived, continues to the north-east entrance of the bazaar. The town itself is divided into two sections—the city proper, surrounded by a high wall, and the suburbs outside. To the south-west, in the town proper, rises the slender tower of Zein-ed-din, slightly over 100 feet high, and not unlike a factory chimney. Further away in the distance—outside the city—the mosque of Taj-ed-din with its blue pointed roof, adjoins the famous Meh-rab shrine, from which all the most ancient and beautiful tiles have been stolen or sold by avid Mullahs for export to Europe.

Then we see the two domes of the mosque and theological college, the Madrassah Shah, where young future Mullahs are educated. To the west of the observer from our high point of vantage, and north-west of the town, lies another mosque, the Panja Shah, in which the hand of one of the prophets, Nazareth Abbas, is buried. A life-size hand and portion of the forearm, most beautifully carved in marble, is shown to devotees in a receptacle in the east wall of the mosque. The actual grave in which the real hand lies is covered with magnificent ancient tiles.

It is with a certain amount of sadness that

one gazes on the old Fin Palace, up on the hills some six miles to the west, and listens to the pathetic and repellent tragedy which took place within its garden walls.

The square garden is surrounded by a high wall, and has buildings on three sides. Marble canals, fed by large marble tanks, in which run streams of limpid water, intersect the garden in the middle of a wide avenue of dark cypresses. The garden was commenced by Shah Abbas. The Palace, however, was built by Fath-Ali-Shah, who also much improved the gardens and made this a favourite residence during the hot summer months.

There is here a very hot natural spring of sulphur water, and copper, which is said to possess remarkable curative qualities, especially for rheumatism and diseases of the blood. One bath is provided for men and another for women.

The Palace, with its quaint pictures and decorations is now in a state of abandonment and semi-collapse. The tragic end (in 1863 or 1864, I could not clearly ascertain which) at this place of Mirza-Taki Khan, then Prime Minister of Persia—as honest and straightforward a politician as Persia has ever possessed—adds a peculiar gloom to the place.

A man of humble birth, but of great genius, Mirza-Taki Khan, rose to occupy, next to the Shah, the highest political position in his country, and attempted to place the Government of Persia on a firm basis, and to eradicate

intrigue and corruption. To this day his popularity is proverbial among the lower classes, by whom he is still revered and respected for his uprightness. The Shah gave him his only sister in marriage, but unhappily one fine day his enemies gained the upper hand at Court. He fell into disgrace, and was banished to Kashan to the Fin Palace. Executioners were immediately sent to murder him by order of the Shah. Mirza-Taki Khan, when their arrival was announced, understood that his end had come. He asked leave to commit suicide instead, which he did by having the arteries of his arms cut open. He bled to death while in his bath.

Royal regret at the irreparable loss was expressed, but it was too late. The body of the cleverest statesman Persia had produced was conveyed for burial to the Sanctuary of Karbala.

One cannot help being struck, in a stifling hot place like Kashan, to find large ice store-houses. Yet plenty of ice is to be got here during the winter, especially from the mountains close at hand. These ice-houses have a pit dug in the ground to a considerable depth, and are covered over with a high conical roof of mud. To the north-east, outside the city, in the suburbs a great many of these ice store-houses are to be seen, as well as a small, blue-tiled roof of a mosque, the pilgrimage of Habbib-Mussah.

There is some cultivation round about Kashan, principally of cotton, tobacco, melons and water-melons, which one sees in large patches wherever there is water obtainable.

Kashan is protected by mountains to the south and west, and by low hills to the north-west, but to the north and north-east the eye roams uninterrupted over an open, flat, dusty, dreary plain of a light brown colour until it meets the sky line on the horizon, softly dimmed by a thick veil of disturbed sand. Due east lie the Siah Kuh (mountains), then comes another gap in the horizon to the south-east.

In the dark and gloomy bazaar the din of hundreds of wooden hammers on as many pieces of copper being made into jugs, trays, pots or pans, is simply deafening, echoed as it is under the vaulted roofs, the sound waves clashing in such an unmusical and confused way as to be absolutely diabolical. A few of these copper vessels are gracefully ornamented and inlaid, but the majority are coarse in their manufacture. They are exported all over the country. The manufactured silk, the other important product of Kashan, finds its way principally to Russia.

The inhabitants are most industrious and, like all industrious people, are extremely docile, amenable to reason, and easy to manage. The Mullahs are said to have much power over the population, and, in fact, we find in Kashan no less than 18 mosques with five times that number of shrines, counting large and small.

I experienced some difficulty in obtaining relays of fresh post horses, the mail having been despatched both north and south the previous night, and therefore no horses were in the station. At seven in the evening I was informed

that five horses had returned and were at my disposal. Twenty minutes later the loads were on their saddles, and I was on the road again.

After travelling under the pitch-dark vaulted bazaars (where, as it was impossible to see where one was going, the horses had to be led), and threading our way out of the suburbs, we travelled on the flat for some time before coming to the hilly portion of the road where it winds its way up at quite a perceptible gradient. We had no end of small accidents and trouble. The horses were half-dead with fatigue. They had gone 48 miles already with the post, and without rest or food had been sent on with me for 28 more miles ! The poor wretches collapsed time after time on the road under their loads, although these were very light, and my servant and I and the chappar boy had to walk the whole way and drag the animals behind us, for they had not sufficient strength to carry us. Even then their knees gave way every now and then, and it was no easy job to get them to stand up again. One of them never did. He died, and, naturally, we had to abandon him.

It came on to blow very hard, and with the horses collapsing on all sides and the loads getting constantly undone owing to the repeated falls of the animals, we could not cover more than one mile, or two, an hour. Caravans generally take the road over these mountains during the day, so that now the road was quite deserted and we could get no assistance from any one. The loss of one horse increased our

difficulty, as it involved putting more weight on the other horses.

At 3.30 a.m. we managed to reach the caravanserai in the mountains at Gyabrabat (Gabarabat), the sight of which was enough to settle all the horses. They one and all threw themselves down on reaching the door, and it was not possible to make them stand again. To continue the journey to Kohrut (Kohrud) through the night, as I had intended, was absolutely out of the question, so we roused the keeper of the hostelry and demanded admission.

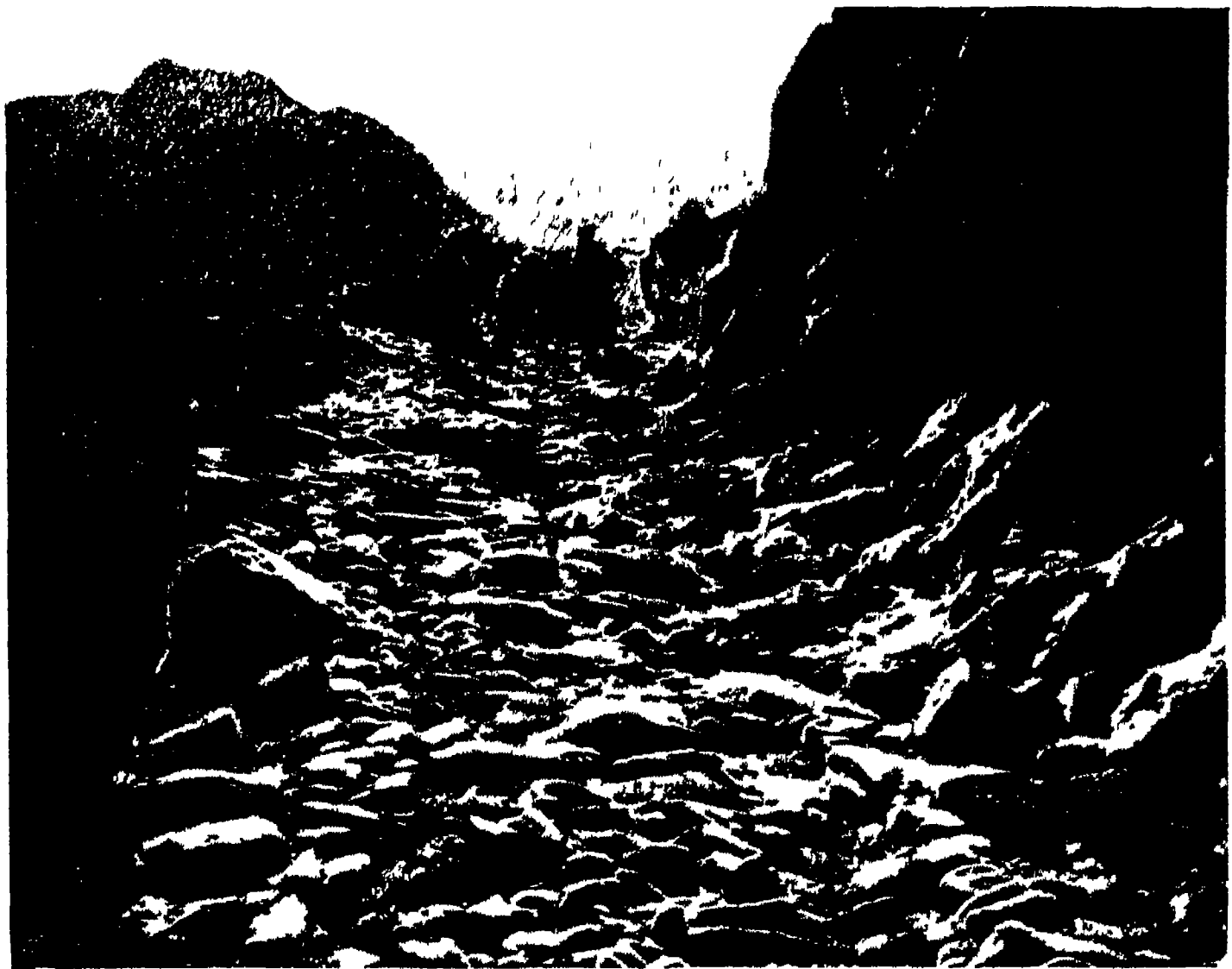
The man was extremely uncivil, as he said he had some grievance against a previous English traveller, but on being assured that I would pay with my own hands for all I got and not through servants—a rule which I always follow, and which saves much unpleasantness and unfair criticism from the natives—he provided me with all I required. First of all I fed the horses. Then Sadek cooked me a capital supper. Then I gave the horses and myself some four hours rest—that refreshed us all very much.

The caravanserai was filthy. All the small rooms and alcoves were occupied, and I preferred to sleep out in the yard, sheltered from the wind behind the huge doorway. I had with me some boxes of my own invention and manufacture, which had accompanied me on several previous journeys, and which, besides a number of other purposes, can serve as a bedstead. They came in very usefully on that particular occasion.

From Gyabrabad to Kohrut the region is supposed to be a famous haunt of robbers. Undoubtedly the country lends itself to that kind of enterprise, being mountainous and much broken up, so that the occupation can be carried on with practical impunity. The road is among rocks and boulders. Although there are no very great elevations in the mountains on either side, the scenery is picturesque, with black-looking rocky slopes, at the bottom of which a tiny and beautifully limpid stream descends towards Kashan. The track is mostly along this stream.

After a steep, stony incline of some length, half-way between Gyabrabad and the Kohrut pass, one comes across a high and well-made dam, the work of a speculator. In winter and during the rains the water of the stream is shut up here into a large reservoir, a high wall being built across the two mountain slopes, and forming a large lake. The water is then sold to the city of Kashan. If in due course of time the purchase-money is not forthcoming, the supply is cut off altogether by blocking up the small aperture in the dam—which lets out the tiny stream the course of which we have been following upwards.

The Persian post-horse is a most wonderful animal. His endurance and powers of recovery are simply extraordinary. Having been properly fed, and enjoyed the few hours' rest, the animals, notwithstanding their wretched condition and the bad road, went fairly well.



THE TRACK ALONG THE KOHRUT DAM



BETWEEN GYABRABAD AND KOHRUT.

On nearing Kohrut one is agreeably surprised to find among these barren mountains healthy patches of agriculture and beautiful groves of fruit-trees. The fruit is excellent here,—apples, plums, apricots, walnuts, and the Kohrut potatoes are said (by the people of Kohrut) to be the best in the world. The most remarkable thing about these patches of cultivation is that the soil in which they occur has been brought there—the mountain itself being rocky—and the imported earth is supported by means of strong stone walls forming long terraces. This speaks very highly for the industry of the natives, who are extremely hardworking. We go through these delightful groves for nearly one mile, when suddenly we find ourselves in front of Kohrut village, most picturesquely perched on the steep slope of the mountain.

The houses are of an absolutely different type from the characteristically domed Persian hovels one has so far come across. They have several storeys, two or even three—an extremely rare occurrence in Persian habitations. The lower windows are very small, like slits in the wall, but the top windows are large and square, usually with some lattice woodwork in front of them. The domed roofs have been discarded, owing to the quantity of wood obtainable here, and the roofs are flat and thatched, supported on long projecting beams and rafters. Just before entering the village a great number of ancient graves can be seen dotted on the mountain-side, and along the road. The view of the place,

with its beautiful background of weird mountains, and the positions of the houses, the door of one on the level with the roof of the underlying one, against the face of the rock, are most striking.

The inhabitants of this village are quite polite and friendly, and lack the usual aggressiveness so common at all the halting places in Persia.

Fresh horses were obtained at the Chappar Khana, and I proceeded on my journey at once. We still wound our way among mountains going higher and higher, until we got over the Kuh-i-buhlan (the pass). From the highest point a lovely view of the valley over which we had come from the north-west displayed itself in dark brown tints, and to the east we had a mass of barren mountains.



THE INTERIOR OF CHAPPAR KHANA AT KOHRUT.

CHAPTER XXVI

Crossing the Pass—Held up by robbers—Amusing courtesy—Brigands to protect from brigands—Parting friends—Soh—Biddeshk—Copper and iron—Robber tribes—An Englishman robbed—A feature of Persian mountains—A military escort—How compensation is paid by the Persian Government—Murchikhar—Robbers and the guards—Ghiez—Distances from Teheran to Isfahan.

It was not till after sunset that we crossed the Pass, and, the horses being tired, my men and I were walking down the incline on the other side to give the animals a rest. It was getting quite dark, and as the chappar boy had warned me that there were brigands about the neighbourhood I walked close to my horse, my revolver being slung to the saddle. The place seemed absolutely deserted, and I was just thinking how still and reposeful the evening seemed, the noise of the horses' hoofs being the only disturbing element amid quiescent nature, when suddenly from behind innocent-looking rocks and boulders leapt up, on both sides of the road, about a dozen well-armed robbers, who attempted to seize the horses. Before they had time to put up their rifles they found themselves covered by my revolver and requested to drop their weapons or I

would shoot them. They hastily complied with my request, and instead of ransacking my baggage, as they had evidently designed to do, had to confine themselves to polite remarks.

“You are very late on the road, sahib?” said one brigand, in a voice of assumed kindness and softness.

“Please put back your revolver. We will not harm you,” said suavely and persuasively another, who displayed a most gaudy waistcoat which he evidently did not want perforated.

Sadek was in a great state of excitement, and entreated me not to shoot. “Persian robbers,” he assured me, with a logic of his own, “do not kill the master until the servant has been killed, because it is the servant who is in charge of the luggage. . . . They would not steal anything now, but I must be kind to these fellows.”

As is usual with persons accustomed to stalk other persons, I did not fail to notice that, while trying to attract my attention by conversation, my interlocutors were endeavouring to surround us. But I checked them in this, and warned them that I had met many brigands before, and was well acquainted with their ways. I hoped they would not compel me to shoot, which I would most certainly do if they attempted any tricks. They well understood that it was risky to try their luck, so they changed tactics altogether. The conversation that ensued was amusing.

“Sahib,” shouted a boisterous robber, very gaily attired, and with cartridges in profusion in

his belt, "there are lots of brigands near here and we want to protect you."

"Yes, I know there are brigands not far from here," I assented.

"We will escort you, for you are our friend, and if we lead you safely out of the mountains, maybe, sahib, you will give us backshish."

I felt certain that I could have no better protection against brigands than the brigands themselves, and preferred to have them under my own supervision rather than give them a chance of attacking us unexpectedly again some miles further on. Anyhow, I resolved to let them come as far as the next pass we had to cross, from which point the country would be more open and a sudden surprise impossible. So I accepted their offer with a politely expressed condition that every man must keep in front of me and not raise his rifle above his waist or I would send a bullet through him.

In the middle of the night we parted on the summit of the pass, and I gave them a good backshish—not so much for the service they had rendered me as for relieving for a few hours the monotony of the journey. They were grateful, and were the most civil brigands I have ever encountered.

While resting on the pass we had an amicable conversation, and I asked them where they got their beautiful clothes and the profusion of gold and silver watch-chains.

"It is not everybody we meet, sahib, that has a formidable revolver like yours," answered the

boisterous brigand, with a fit of sarcastic merriment, echoed by all of us.

“Yes,” I retorted in the same sarcastic spirit, “if it had not been for the revolver, possibly next time I came along this road I might meet the company dressed up like sahibs, in my clothes !”

I advised them to put up a white flag of truce next time they sprang out from behind rocks with the intention of holding up another Englishman, or surely some day or other there would be an accident.

We all laughed heartily, and parted with repeated salaams—and my luggage intact.

In the moonlight I took the precaution to see them well out of sight on one side of the pass before we began to descend on the other, and then we proceeded down the steep and rocky incline.

We reached Soh (8,000 feet) early in the morning, and went on to the Chappar house at Biddeshk. Here one abandons the region of the Kehriz Kohrud and Kale Karf mountains, west and east of the road respectively, and travels over a flat sandy country devoid of vegetation and water.

Copper and iron are to be found at several places in the mountains between Kashan and Soh, for instance near Gudjar, at Dainum, and at Kohrut.

October is the month when the Backhtiari tribes are somewhat troublesome previous to their return to winter quarters. A great many

caravans are attacked and robbed on this road, unless escorted by soldiers. Daring attempts have even been made to seize caravans of silver bullion for the Bank of Persia. Only a few days before I went through, an English gentleman travelling from Isfahan was robbed between Soh and Murchikhar of all his baggage, money, and clothes.

The country lends itself to brigandage. One can see a flat plain for several miles to the north and south, but to the west and east are most intricate mountain masses where the robber bands find suitable hiding places for themselves and their booty. To the north-west we have flat open country, but to the west from Biddeshk there are as many as three different ranges of mountains. To the east rises the peak Kehriz Natenz. A great many low hill ranges lie between the main backbone of the high and important range extending from north-west to south-east, and the route we follow, and it is curious to notice, not only here but all over the parts of Persia I visited, that the great majority of sand dunes, and of hill and mountain ranges face north or north-east. In other words, they extend either from north-west to south-east, or roughly from west to east ; very seldom from north to south.

From Biddeshk two soldiers insisted on escorting my luggage. I was advised to take them, for in default, one cannot claim compensation from the Persian Government should the luggage be stolen. In the case of *bona fide* European travellers, robbed on the road, the

Persian Government is extremely punctual in making good the damage sustained and paying ample compensation.

The method employed by the local Governor, responsible for the safety of travellers on the road, is to inflict heavy fines on all the natives of the district in which the robbery has occurred, —a very simple and apparently effective way, it would seem, of stopping brigandage, but one which, in fact, increases it, because, in order to find the money to pay the fines, the natives are driven to the road, each successive larceny going towards part payment of the previous one.

One or two domed reservoirs of rain-water are found by the road-side, but the water is very bad.

The soldiers, laden with cartridges, ran along by the side of my horses and pretended to keep a sharp look-out for robbers. Every now and then they got much excited, loaded their rifles, and fired away shot after shot at phantom brigands, whom, they said, they perceived peeping above sand hills a long way off.

At Murchikhar there is nothing to be seen. The post-horses were very good here and I was able to go through this uninteresting part of the road at a good speed of from six to seven miles an hour. To the west the mountains were getting quite close, and, in fact, we had hills all round except to the south-east. Murchikhar is at a fairly high altitude, 5,600 ft.

One still heard much about brigands. Soldiers, armed to the teeth, insisted on accompanying my luggage. This, of course, involved endless back-



CHAPPING—THE AUTHOR'S POST HORSES



shish, but had to be put up with, as it is one of the perquisites of the guards stationed at the various stages. I have heard it stated that if one does not require their services it is often these protectors themselves who turn into robbers. There is a guard-house on the road, and the two soldiers stationed there told us that a large band of thirty robbers had visited them during the early hours of the morning, and had stolen from them all their provisions, money and tobacco !

We were not troubled in any way, and, with the exception of some suspicious horsemen a long way off making for the mountains, we hardly met a soul on the road.

A curious accident happened to one of my luggage horses. For some reason of his own he bolted, and galloped to the top of one of the *kanat* cones, when getting frightened at the deep hole before him he jumped it. His fore-legs having given way on the steep incline on the other side, he fell on his head and turned a complete somersault, landing flat on his back, where, owing to the packs, he remained with his legs up in the air until we came to his aid and freed him of the loads.

On nearing Ghiez the track is over undulating country, but after that the road to Isfahan is good and flat, but very sandy and dusty. I got to Ghiez in the evening but proceeded at once to Isfahan. We galloped on the twelve miles, and in less than two hours I was most hospitably received in the house of Mr. Preece, the British Consul-General in Isfahan.

The distances from Teheran are as follows :—

From Teheran to Kum	24 farsakhs . .	96 miles.
„ Kum to Kashan	17 „ . .	68 „
„ Kashan to Kohrut	7 „ . .	28 „
„ Kohrut to Biddeshk	6 „ . .	24 „
„ Biddeshk to Murchikhar	6 „ . .	24 „
„ Murchikhar to Ghiez	6 „ . .	24 „
„ Ghiez to Isfahan	3 „ . .	12 „
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Total	69 farsakhs	or 276 miles.

The time occupied in covering the whole distance, including halts and delays, was somewhat less than four days.

CHAPTER XXVII

Missionary work in Persia—Educational and medical work—No Mahommedan converts—Bibles—Julfa—Armenian settlement—Conservative customs—Armenian women—Their education—The Armenian man—Europeans—A bird's-eye view of Isfahan—Armenian graveyard—A long bridge—The Rev. James Loraine Garland—Mission among the Jews.

THERE is little to say of interest in connection with Missionary work in Persia, except that a considerable amount of good is being done in the educational and medical line. There are well-established schools and hospitals. The most praiseworthy institution is the supply of medicinal advice and medicine gratis or at a nominal cost. As far as the work of Christianising is concerned, it must be recollected that Missionaries are only allowed in Persia on sufferance, and are on no account permitted to make converts among the Mahommedans. Any Mussulman, man, woman, or child, who discards his religion for Christianity, will in all probability lose his life.

If any Christianising work is done at all it has to be done surreptitiously and at a considerable amount of risk to both convert and converter. Some interest in the Christian religion is

nevertheless shown by Mussulmans of the younger generation—who now are practically atheists at heart—but whether this interest is genuine or not it is not for me to say. There is much in the Bible that impresses them, and I understand that constant applications are made for copies of translations into the Persian language. To avoid the great waste which occurred when Bibles were given away for nothing, a nominal charge is now made so as to prevent people throwing the book away or using it for evil purposes.

In Isfahan itself there are no missionaries among the Mahommedans, but some are to be found at Julfa, a suburb of Isfahan, on the south bank of the Zindah-rud (river). Julfa was in former days a prosperous Armenian settlement of some 30,000 inhabitants, but is now mostly in ruins since the great migration of Armenians to India.

There is an Armenian Archbishop at Julfa. He has no real power, but is much revered by the Armenians themselves. He provides priests for the Armenians of India.

A handsome cathedral, with elaborate ornamentations and allegorical pictures, is one of the principal structures in Julfa.

One cannot help admiring the Armenians of Julfa for retaining their conservative customs so long. Within the last few years, however, rapid strides have been made towards the abandonment of the ancient dress and tongue. At Julfa the Armenians have to a great extent retained their native language, which they

invariably speak among themselves, although many of the men are equally fluent in Persian ; but in cities like Teheran, where they are thrown into more direct contact with Persians, the Armenians are almost more conversant with Persian than with their own tongue. The men and women of the better classes have adopted European clothes, in which they might easily be mistaken for Southern Italians or Spaniards.

But in Julfa such is not the case, and the ancient style of dress is so far maintained. One is struck by the great number of women in the streets of Julfa and the comparative lack of men. This is because all able-bodied men migrate to India or Europe, leaving their women behind until sufficient wealth is accumulated to export them also to foreign lands.

The education of the Armenian women of the middle and lower classes consists principally in knitting socks—one sees rows of matrons and girls sitting on the doorsteps busily employed thus,—and in various forms of culinary instruction. But the better class woman is well educated in European fashion, and is bright and intelligent.

The Armenian woman, in her ample and speckless white robes, her semi-covered face, and beautiful soft black eyes, is occasionally captivating. The men, on the other hand, although handsome, have something indescribable about them that does not make them particularly attractive.

The Armenian man—the true type of the

Levantine—has great business capacities, wonderful facility for picking up languages, and a persuasive flow of words ever at his command. Sceptical, ironical and humorous—with a bright, amusing manner alike in times of plenty or distress—a born philosopher, but uninspiring of confidence,—with eyes that never look straight into yours, but are ever roaming all over the place,—with religious notions adaptable to business prospects,—very hospitable and good-hearted, given to occasional orgies,—such is the Persian-Armenian of to-day.

The more intelligent members of the male community migrate to better pastures, where they succeed, by steady hard work and really practical brains, in amassing considerable fortunes. The less enterprising remain at home to make and sell wine. Personally, I found Armenians surprisingly honest.

In Julfa the Europeans—of whom, except in business, there are few—have comfortable, almost luxurious residences. The principal streets of the Settlement are extremely clean and nice for Persia. The Indo-European Telegraph Office is also here. But the best part of Julfa—from a pictorial point of view—is the extensive Armenian cemetery, near a picturesque background of hills and directly on the slopes of Mount Sofia. There are hundreds of rectangular tombstones, many with neatly bevelled edges, and epitaphs of four or five lines. A cross is engraved on each grave, and some have a little urn at the head for flowers.

From the roof of a house situated at the highest point of the inclined plane, one obtains a magnificent bird's-eye view of Isfahan, its ancient grandeur being evinced by the great expanse of ruins all round it. The walls of Isfahan were said at one time to measure twenty-four miles in circumference. Like all other cities of Persia, Isfahan does not improve by too distant a view. The mud roofs are so alike in colour to the dried mud of the streets that a deadly monotony must follow, as a matter of course ; but the many beautiful green gardens round about and in Isfahan itself are a great relief to the eye, and add much attraction to the landscape.

Most prominent of all buildings in the city are the great semi-spherical dome of the Mesjid-i-Shah, with its gracefully ornamented tiles ; the Madrassah ; the multi-columned, flat-roofed Palace, and the high minarets in couples, dotted all over the city. Then round about, further away, stand any number of curious circular towers, the pigeon towers.

The bed of the river between Isfahan and Julfa is over six hundred feet wide, and is spanned by three bridges. One of these, with thirty-four arches, is no less than 1,000 ft. in length, but is much out of repair.

The Armenian Christians of Julfa are enjoying comparative safety at present, but until quite recently were much persecuted by the Mahomedans, the Mullahs being particularly bitter against them.

One sees a great many priests about Julfa, and as I visited the place on a Sunday the people looked so very demure and sanctimonious—I am speaking of the Armenians—on their way out of church ; taciturn and with head low or talking in a whisper, all toddling alongside the wall—as people from church generally do,—that I must confess I was glad when I left this place of oppressive sanctity and returned to Isfahan. Somehow, Julfa impresses one as a discordant note in Persian harmony—although a very fine and pleasing note in itself.

Until quite recently the Persians objected to foreigners residing even in Isfahan itself. The officials of the Bank of Persia were the first to take up their abode within the city wall, then soon after came Mr. Preece, our able and distinguished Consul-General.

There is now a third Englishman residing in Jubareh, the Jewish quarter, the Revd. James Loraine Garland, of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews of Isfahan. Why such a Society should exist at all seems to any one with a sense of humour bewildering, but on getting over the first shock of surprise one finds that of all the Missions to Persia it is probably the most sensible, and worked on practical, sound, useful lines. Much as I am unfavourably inclined towards religious Missions of any kind, I could not help being impressed with Mr. Garland's very interesting work.

The first time I saw Mr. Garland I was nearly run over by him as he was riding a race with a

sporting friend on the Golahek road near Teheran—raising clouds of dust, much to the concern of passers-by.

The same day I met Mr. Garland in Teheran, when he was garbed in the ample clothes of the sporting friend, his own wardrobe having been stolen, with his money and all other possessions, by robbers on the Isfahan-Kashan road. In fact, he was the Englishman referred to in Chapter XXVI.

Being somewhat of a sportsman myself, this highly-sporting clergyman appealed to me. Extremely gentlemanly, courteous, tactful, sensible and open-minded, he was not a bit like a missionary. He was a really good man. His heart and soul were in his work. He very kindly asked me to visit his Mission in Isfahan, and it was a real pleasure to see a Mission worked on such sensible lines.

The first Mission to the Jews of Persia and Chaldea was established in 1844 by the Reverend Dr. Stern, who resided part of the year in Bagdad, and the remainder in Isfahan. The work was up-hill, and in 1865 the Mission was suspended.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Mission among Jews—Schools for boys and girls—A practical institution—The Jews of Persia—Persecution by Persians—Characteristics of Jews—Girls—Occupations—Taxation—The social level of Jews.

FROM October, 1889, to December, 1891, a Christianised Jew of Teheran, named Mirza Korollah, worked in Isfahan as the representative of the Society for promoting Christianity among the Jews. A Bible depôt was opened, and a school started at the request of the Jews themselves. In December, 1891, however, Mirza Korollah was banished from the city, and the work was again interrupted.

In 1897, Mr. Garland volunteered to undertake the work in Persia, and his offer was gladly accepted. On his arrival in Isfahan he found, he told me, a prosperous boys' school, that had been re-opened in 1894 by a native Jewish Christian, who rejoiced in the name of Joseph Hakim, and who carried on the educational work under the supervision of members of the Church Missionary Society resident in Julfa. It was deemed advisable to commence a night-school, as many of the boys were unable to attend day

classes. The scheme answered very well, and has been steadily continued.

As many as 200 boys attended the school daily in February, 1898, a fact that shows the success of the new enterprise from the very beginning.

At the invitation of a number of Jewesses, Miss Stuart, the Bishop of Waiapu's daughter, kindly consented to go over twice a week to the Jewish quarter to instruct them in the Holy Scriptures. This led to the commencement of a girls' school with twelve pupils, at a time of great turmoil and anxiety. However, the experiment had the happiest results.

It was not, nevertheless, till 1899 that Mr. Garland was able to take up his abode in the Jewish quarter. He met with no opposition whatever from Mahommedans or Jews. The usual Sunday service, attended by converts and inquirers, and a Saturday afternoon class were commenced in 1899, and have uninterruptedly continued to the present time.

To me, personally, the most important part of the Mission, and one to which more time is devoted than to praying, was the excellent carpentry class for boys, begun in 1900, and the carpet-weaving apparatus set up on the premises for the girls. The former has been a great success, even financially, and is paying its way. The latter, although financially not yet a success, is of great value in teaching the girls how to weave. Necessarily, so many hands have to be employed in the manufacture of a large carpet, and the time spent in the manufacture is so long,

that it is hardly possible to expect financial prosperity from mere beginners ; but the class teaches the girls a way to earn money for themselves in future years.

Both trades were selected by Mr. Garland, particularly because they were the most suitable in a country where Jews are excluded from the more honest and manly trades, and Jewesses often grow up to be more of a hindrance than a help to their husbands. Worse still is the case of Jews who become Christians ; they have the greatest difficulty in earning their living at all.

These industrial occupations are a great practical help to the studies of the pupils, who are taught, besides their own language, Persian and Hebrew, and, if they wish, English, geography, etc.

More frivolous but less remunerative forms of recreation, such as cricket, tennis, football, or gymnastic drills,—which invariably accompany Christianity in the East, and develop most parts of a convert's anatomy except his brain,—have not been deemed of sufficient importance among the Jews of Isfahan, who would, moreover, think our best English games or muscle-developers in the highest degree indecorous and unseemly.

On the whole the Society's work among the Jews of Teheran, Hamadan and Isfahan has been most encouraging, and this is to be put down entirely to the tact and personal influence of Mr. Garland, who is greatly respected by Jews and Mahommedans alike. No better testimony to the appreciation of his work could exist than the fact that in his interesting journeys through

Persia, he is frequently invited to preach in crowded synagogues.

It seems probable that the Jews of Persia are descendants of the Ten Tribes, and more probable still that Jews have resided in Isfahan from its earliest foundation.

In the tenth century—under the Dilemi dynasty—Isfahan consisted of two cities, Yahoodieh (Jewry) and Shehristan (the City). In the middle of the twelfth century, according to Benjamin of Tudela, the Jews of Isfahan numbered 15,000.

At present they number about 5,000. They are mostly pedlars by profession, or engaged in making silk thread (Abreesham Kâr, Charkhtâbee, etc). There are a few merchants of comparative influence. Jewellers and traders in precious stones, brokers and wine-sellers are frequent, but the majority consists almost entirely of diviners, musicians, dancers—music and dancing are considered low, contemptible occupations in Persia—scavengers, and beggars.

The Jews of Isfahan, like those of all other cities in Persia, have been subjected to a great deal of oppression. There is a story that Timour-i-Lang (Tamerlane—end of 14th century) was riding past a synagogue in Isfahan, where the Mesjid-i-Ali now stands, and that the Jews made such a horrible noise at their prayers (in saying the “Shema, Israel” on the Day of Atonement) that his horse bolted and he was thrown and lamed. Hence his name, and hence also a terrible massacre of the Jews,

which reduced their number to about one-third.

Even to this day it is not easy for Jews to obtain justice against Mahommedans. Only as recently as 1901 a Jew was murdered in cold blood a few miles from Isfahan, and his body flung into the river. Although the murder had been witnessed, and the murderer was well known, no punishment was ever inflicted upon him.

The Jews of Isfahan possess striking features, as can be seen by a characteristic head of a man reproduced in the illustration. The face is generally very much elongated, with aquiline nose of abnormal length and very broad at the nostrils. The brow is heavy, screening deeply-sunken eyes revealing a mixed expression of sadness and slyness, tempered somewhat by probable abuse of animal qualities. Of a quiet and rather sulky nature—corroded by ever-unsatisfied avidity—assumedly courteous, but morose by nature,—with a mighty level head in the matter of business ; such is the Jew of Isfahan. He is extremely picturesque, quite biblical in his long loose robe and skull cap, with turban wound tight round his head.

Jewish girls when very young are nice-looking without being beautiful, very supple and pensive, and with expressive eyes. They lack the unsteady, insincere countenance of the men, and have reposeful, placid faces, with occasional good features. There is a good deal of character in their firmly closed lips, the upper lip being



JEWISH GIRLS, ISFAHAN



AN ISFAHAN JEW

slightly heavy but well-shaped. The inside of the mouth is adorned with most regular, firm, and beautiful teeth. Curiously enough, the typical Jewish nose—so characteristic in men—is seldom markedly noticeable in women. I have even seen Jewish girls with turned-up noses. Their arms are beautifully modelled, and the hands as a whole extremely graceful, with unusually long and supple fingers, but with badly-shaped nails of an unwholesome colour.

Jewesses in Persia are not kept in seclusion and go about with uncovered faces, which exposes them to constant and unpleasant insult from the Mahommedans. They dress differently from Persian women, with a long skirt of either black, blue, or coloured cotton. The head is framed in a white kerchief, leaving exposed the jet black hair parted in the middle and covering the temples. Over that is worn a long cloak, either black or white, almost identical with the Persian “chudder.”

Jewesses are said to be most affectionate and devoted to their husbands and their families. They are extremely amenable to reason—except in cases of jealousy, which is one of the leading characteristics of the race in general and of Jewish women in particular. They are hard-working, intelligent, thrifty. They take life seriously: are endowed with no sense of humour to speak of—it would be difficult to have any under their circumstances—and whether owing to severe anæmia, caused by wretched and insufficient

food, or to some external influence, are often affected by melancholia.

Soft and shy in manner and speech, under normal circumstances, pale and silent, the Jewish woman is not unattractive.

One of the few occupations open to Jewesses is the practice of midwifery.

Hunted as the Jews are by everybody in the streets, and in the bazaar, insulted, spat upon, the women often compelled to prostitution, it is to be marvelled that any honesty at all is left in them.

The higher Persian schools and colleges do not admit Jews as students, nor is education permitted to them even in the lower Persian schools. Therefore, the welcome work of Mr. Garland is much needed and appreciated. A special quarter is reserved in which the Jews must live, huddled together, the majority of them in abject poverty. Until of late no peace was given them. Their customs were interfered with in every way by vagabond Persians, and the little money they made by industrious habits was extorted from them by officials or by the enterprising Persian to whom the Jewish community was farmed out.

The Jews of a city are taxed a certain sum, usually beyond what they can afford to pay. Some speculator undertakes to pay the amount for them to the local Governor and receives authority to compensate himself from the Jewish community as best he can, either by making them work, or trade, or by selling their clothes

or depriving them of the few articles of furniture they may possess.

Until quite lately, at public festivities the meek and resigned Jews were driven before an insulting mob who held them in derision, and exposed them to most abject treatment ; some of their number ending by being pitched into the water-tank which adorns the courtyard or garden of most residences. Little by little, however, with the spread of civilisation, Jews have been spared the torture of these baths.

The Jew is looked upon as unclean and untrustworthy by the Persian, who refuses to use him as a soldier, but who gladly employs him to do all sorts of dirty jobs which Persian pride would not allow him to do himself. His social level therefore stands even lower than that of the Shotri of India, the outcast who does not stop at the basest occupations.

The majority of the older Jews are illiterate, but not unintelligent. Each city has one or more Rabbis or priests, but they have no power and receive a good share of the insults in the Persian bazaars.

Whatever feeling of repulsion towards the race one may have, the position of the Jews in Persia—although infinitely better than it was before—is still a most pathetic one.

CHAPTER XXIX

The square of Isfahan—The Palace gate—The entrance to the bazaar—Beggars—Formalities and etiquette—The bazaar—Competition—How Persians buy—Long credit—Arcades—Hats—Cloth shops—Sweet shops—Butchers—Leather goods—Saddle-bags—The bell shop—Trunks.

THE great square of Isfahan is looked upon as the centre of the city. It is a huge oblong, with the great and beautiful dome of the Mesjid-i-Shah on one side of the long rectangle, and another high domed mosque with two high minarets at the end. The very impressive red and white quadrangular palace gate, flat-topped, and with a covered blue verandah supported on numerous slender columns, stands on the side of the square opposite the Mesjid-i-Shah mosque.

To the north of the great square one enters the bazaar by a high gate, handsomely tiled with flower ornamentations ; this gateway has three lower windows and a triple upper one, and a doorway under the cool shade of the outer projecting pointed archway. To the right of the entrance as one looks at it, rises a three-storied building as high as the gate of the bazaar. It has a pretty upper verandah, the roof of which is supported on transverse sets of three wooden

columns each, except the outer corner roof-supports, which are square and of bricks. In front is an artistic but most untidy conglomeration of awnings to protect from the sun pedlars, merchants and people enjoying their kalias, or a thimbleful of tea.

There are men selling fruit which is displayed upon the dirty ground, and there are tired horses with dismounted cavaliers sleeping by their side, the reins fastened for precaution to a heavy stone or slung to the arm. One sees masses of children of all ages and conditions of health, from the neatly attired son of the wealthy merchant, who disports himself with his eldest brother, to the orphan boy, starving, and in rags covered with mud. There is a little cripple with a shrunken leg, and further, an old man with lupus in its most ghastly form. Disreputably-clothed soldiers lie about in the crowd, and a woman or two with their faces duly screened in white cloths may be seen.

The sight of a sahib always excites great curiosity in Persia. Followed by a crowd of loafers and most insistent beggars, one forces one's way into the crowded bazaar, while the ghulams of the Consulate—without whom it would be indecorous to go anywhere—shove the people on one side or the other without ceremony, drive the donkeys, laden with wood or panniers of fruit, into the shops—much to the horror of the shopman,—and disband the strings of mules and the horsemen to make room for the passing sahib.

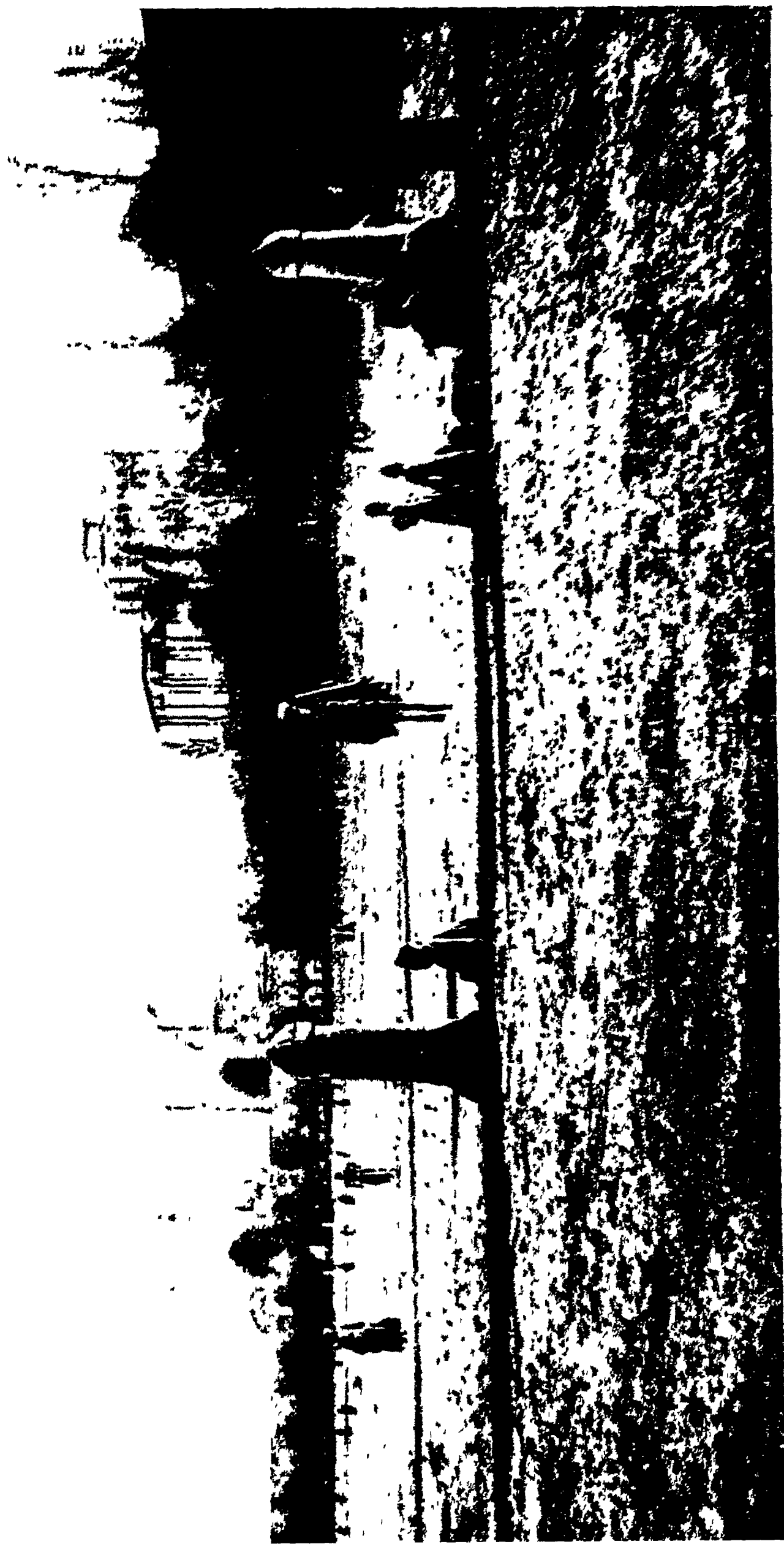
It is very difficult, under such circumstances,

to stop any length of time at any particular spot to study the shops, the shop-people, and the buyers, for instead of being an unobserved spectator, one is at all times the principal actor in the scene and the centre of attention, and therefore a most disturbing element in the crowd.

There are so many complicated and tiresome formalities to be adhered to in order to avoid offending the natives, or the officials, or the susceptibilities of foreign residents, who seem to feel responsible for the doings of every traveller—and who, at all events, remain to suffer for the untactful deeds of some of them,—and there are so many things one must not do for fear of destroying the prestige of one's country, that, really, if one possesses a simple and practical mind, one gets rather tired of Persian town life, with its exaggerated ties, its empty outward show and pomp and absolute lack of more modest aims which, after all, make real happiness in life.

As for European ladies it is considered most improper to be seen with uncovered faces in the bazaar. In fact, walking anywhere in the town they are generally exposed to insult.

I once took a walk through the various bazaars, but the second time, at our Consul's recommendation, was advised to ride in state, with gold-braided, mounted Consulate ghulams preceding and following me, while I myself rode a magnificent stallion presented by Zil-es-Sultan to our Consul. The horse had not been ridden for some time and was slightly fresh. The place to



THE SQUARE, ISFAHAN.

which we directed our animals was the brass bazaar, the most crowded and diabolically noisy place in the Shah's dominions.

The sudden change from the brilliant light of the sun to the pitch darkness of the vaulted bazaar, affected one's sight, and it was some few seconds before one could distinguish anything, although one could hear the buzzing noise of an excited crowd, and the cries of the ghulams ordering the people to make room for the cavalcade.

In nearly all bazaars of the principal cities of Persia a very good custom prevails. One or more streets are devoted entirely to the same article, so that the buyer may conveniently make comparisons, and the various merchants are also kept up to the mark by the salutary competition close at hand thus rendered unavoidable. A Persian does not go to a shop to buy anything without going to every other shop in the bazaar to ask whether he can get a similar article better and cheaper. Such a convenience as fixed prices, alike for all, does not exist in the Persian bazaar, and prices are generally on the ascending or descending scale, according to the merchant's estimate of his customer's wealth. It is looked upon as a right and a duty to extort from a rich man the maximum of profit, whereas from a poor fellow a few shais benefit are deemed sufficient.

To buy anything at all in the bazaar involves gréat loss of time—and patience,—excessive consumption of tea plus the essential kalian-smoking. Two or three or more visits are paid

to the stall by Persian buyers before they can come to an agreement with the merchant, and when the goods are delivered it is the merchant's turn to pay endless visits to his customer's house before he can obtain payment for them. Long credit is generally given by merchants to people known to them. There is comparatively little ready money business done except in the cheapest goods.

We shoved our way along through the very narrow streets with a long row before us of sun columns, piercing through the circular openings in the domed arcade of the bazaar, and projecting brilliant patches of light now on brightly-coloured turbans, now on the black chudder of a woman, now on the muddy ground constantly sprinkled with water to keep the streets cool.

There are miles of bazaar, in Teheran and Isfahan, roofed over in long arcades to protect the shops and buyers from the sun in summer, from the rain and snow in winter. The height of the arcade is from thirty to sixty feet, the more ancient ones being lower than the modern ones.

To any one well acquainted with other Eastern countries there is absolutely nothing in a Persian bazaar that is worth buying. The old and beautiful objects of art have left the country long ago, and the modern ones have neither sufficient artistic merit nor intrinsic value to be worth the trouble and expense of sending them home. For curiosity's sake—yes, there are a few tawdry articles which may amuse friends in Europe, but

what I mean is that there is nothing that is really of intense interest or skilful workmanship, such as one can find in Japan, in China, in Morocco or Egypt.

We ride through the street of hatters, each shop with walls lined with piles of *kolah* hats, black and brimless, shaped either in the section of a cone or rounded with a depression on the top. They are made of astrakan or of black felt, and are worn by the better people ; but further on we come to cheaper shops, where spherical skull caps of white or light brown felt are being manufactured for the lower classes.

As we ride along, a stinging smell of dyes tells us that we are in the cloth street, indigo colours prevailing, and also white and black cottons and silks. One cannot help pitying the sweating shopman, who is busy unrolling cloths of various makes before a number of squatting women, who finger each and confabulate among themselves, and request to have the roll deposited by their side for further consideration with a mountain of other previously unrolled fabrics,—just like women at home. The rolls are taken from neat wooden shelves, on which, however, they seldom rest. Soiled remnants of European stocks play a very important part in this section of the bazaar.

On turning round a corner we have shoes and boots, foreign made, of the favourite side-elastic pattern, or the native white canvas ones with rope soles—most comfortable and serviceable for walking. The local leather ones have strong

soles with nails and turned-up toes, not unlike the familiar Turkish shoe; while the slippers for women have no back to them at the heel and have fancy toes.

Then come the attractive sweet-shops, with huge trays of transparent candy, and the *Pashmak* pulled sugar, as white and light as raw silk, most delicious but sticky. In bottles above, the eye roams from highly coloured confetti to *Abnabad* and *Kors* or other deadly-looking lozenges, while a crowd of enraptured children deposit shais in the hands of the prosperous trader, who promptly weighs and gives in exchange a full measure of *rahat-ul-holkoom*, "the ease of the throat," or candied sugar, duly packed in paper bags.

There is nothing very attractive in the butchers' bazaar; the long rows of skinned animals black with flies, and in various degrees of freshness, made even less artistic by ornamental decorations of paper rosettes and bits of gold and silver paper. Beef, camel, mutton, game and chickens, all dead and with throats cut—the Mahomedan fashion of killing—can be purchased here, but the smell of meat is so strong and sickening that we will promptly adjourn to the leather-work bazaar.

For a man, this is probably the most typical and interesting section of the Persian retail commerce. There is something picturesque and artistic in the clumsy silver or brass or iron mounted saddles, with handsome red, or green, or brown ample leather flaps, gracefully orna-

mented with more or less elaboration to suit the pockets of different customers. Then the harness is pretty, with its silver inlaid iron decoration, or solid silver or brass, and the characteristic stirrups, nicely chiselled and not unlike the Mexican ones. The greater part of the foot can rest on the stirrup, so broad is its base. Then come the saddlebags of all sizes, the *horjin*, in cloth, in sacking, in expensive leather, in carpeting, of all prices, with an ingenious device of a succession of loops fastening the one into the other, the last with a padlock, to secure the contents of the bag from intrusive hands.

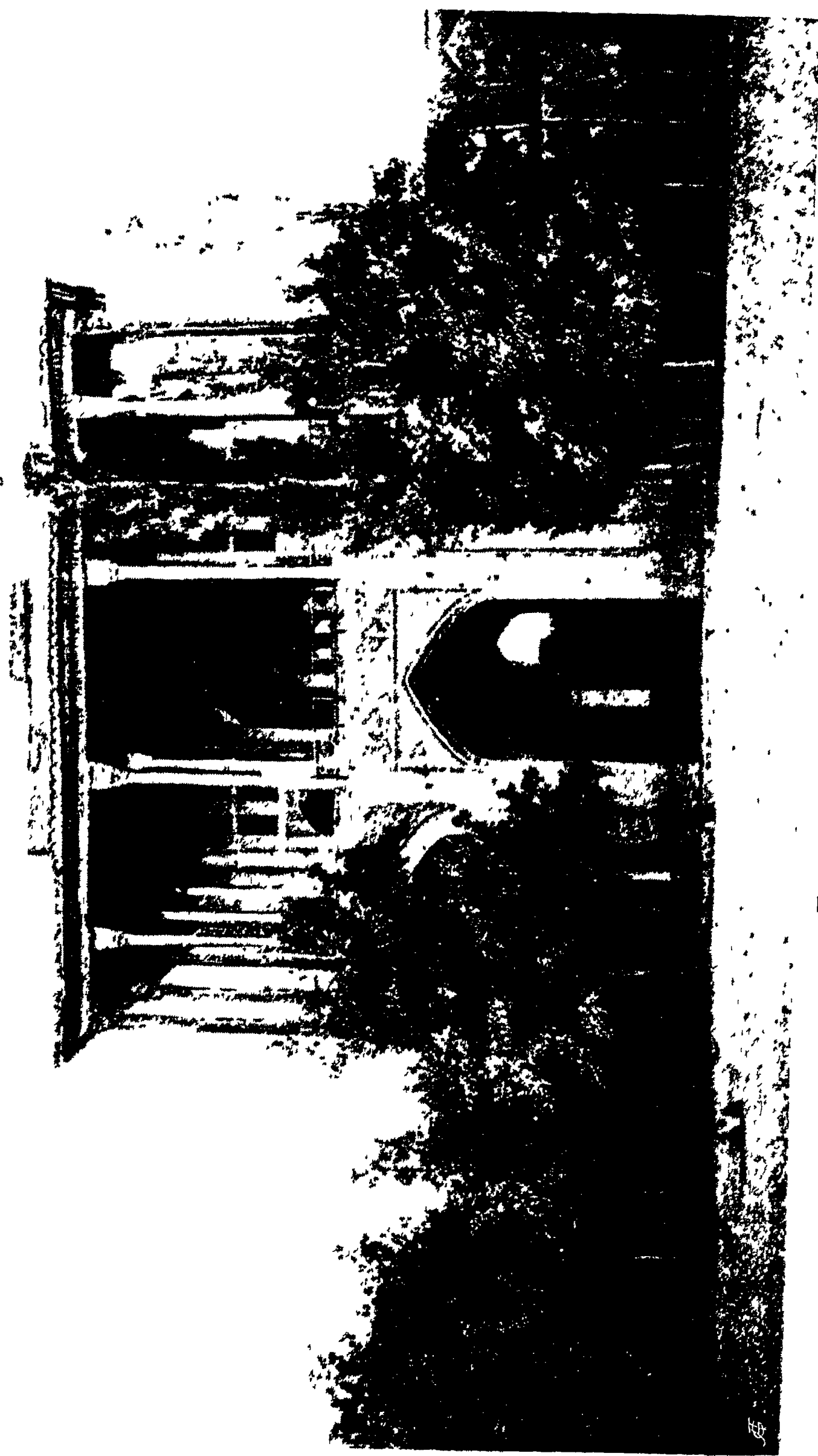
These *horjins*—or double bags—are extremely convenient and are the most usual contrivance in Persia for conveying luggage on horseback or mules.

Then in the lower part of the shop there is a grand display of leather purses, sheaths for knives, and a collection of leather stock whips, gracefully tied into multiple knots.

In this same bazaar, where everything in connection with riding or loading animals can be purchased, are also to be found the bell shops. These confine themselves particularly to horses', mules' and camels' neck decorations. Long tassels, either red or black, in silk or dyed horse-hair, silk or leather bands with innumerable small conical shrill bells, and sets of larger bells in successive gradations of sizes, one hanging inside the other, are found here. Then there are some huge cylindrical bells standing about

two and a half feet high, with scrolls and geometrical designs on their sides. These are for camels and are not intended to hang from the neck. They are slung on one side under the lighter of the two loads of the pack.

Next, one is attracted by a shop full of leather trunks, of the reddest but not the best morocco, stretched while wet upon a rough wooden frame. Primitive ornamentations are painted on the leather, and the corners of each box are strengthened with tin caps and rings. The trunks for pack animals are better made than the others, and are solidly sewn, with heavy straps and rings to sling them upon the saddles. Gaudy revolver pouches, cartridge belts, and slings for daggers are to be purchased in the same shop.



THE PALACE GATE, ISFAHAN.

CHAPTER XXX

The Brass Bazaar—Mirror shop—Curdled milk—A tea shop—
Fruit and vegetable bazaar—The walnut seller—The
Auctioneer—Pipe shops—Barber—Headdress—Bread shops
—Caravanserais—The day of rest.

WINDING our way through the labyrinth of narrow streets, and meeting a crescendo of diabolical din as we approach it, we emerge into a more spacious and lighter arcade, where hundreds of men are hammering with all their might upon pieces of copper that are being shaped into trays, pots with double spouts, or pans. This is the coppersmiths' bazaar. On a long low brick platform, extending from one end to the other on both sides of the street, is tastefully arranged the work already finished. Huge circular trays have coarse but elaborate ornamentations of figures, trees and birds chiselled upon them—not unlike the Indian Benares trays in general appearance, but not in the character of the design. Copper vases with spouts are gracefully shaped, the ancient Persian models being maintained. They are much used by Persians in daily life. More elaborate is the long-necked vessel with a circular body and slender curved

spout, that rests upon a very quaint and elegantly designed wash-basin with perforated cover and exaggerated rim. This is used after meals in the household of the rich, when an attendant pours tepid water scented with rose-water upon the fingers, which have been used in eating instead of a fork. These vessels and basins are usually of brass. All along the ground, against the wall, stand sets of concentric trays of brass, copper and pewter, and metal tumblers innumerable, having execrable designs upon them, and rendered more hideous by being nickel-plated all over. Each shop, about ten to twenty feet long and eight to fifteen wide, has a furnace in one corner.

Considering the few and primitive tools employed, it is really wonderful that the work is as good as it is. The polishing of trays is generally done with their feet by boys, who stand on them and with a circular motion of the body revolve the tray to the right and left upon a layer of wet sand until, after some hours of labour, a sufficiently shiny surface is obtained by friction.

I became much interested in watching a man joining together two pieces of metal to be turned into an amphora, but the noise made the horse I rode very restless. It was impossible to hear any one speak, the din of the hammered metal being so acute and being echoed in each dome of the arcade. The horse became so alarmed when the bellows began to blow upon the fire that he tried to throw me, first by standing on his fore-legs and scattering the crowd of yelling natives

with his hindlegs, then by standing up erect the other way about. In a moment the place was clear of people ; some had leapt on to the side platform : others had rushed inside the shops. The horse delighted in pirouetting about, kicking the nearest metal vases and trays all over the place, and causing quite a commotion. It was rather amusing to watch the rapidity with which the merchants a little way off withdrew their goods to safety inside the premises to prevent further damage. The horse, being then satisfied that he could not shake me off, continued the journey more or less peacefully through the bazaar.

Here is a mirror shop—imports from Austria. There the flourishing grain merchants, whose premises are the neatest and cleanest of the whole bazaar. Each merchant tastily displays his various cereals in heaps on speckless enormous brass trays, and by the side of them dried fruit, in which he also deals extensively. His shop is decorated with silvered or red or blue glass balls.

Further on is another very neat place, the curdled-milk retailer's, with large flat metal tanks filled with milk, and a great many trays, large and little, in front of his premises. He, too, keeps his place and belongings—but not himself—most beautifully clean. He does a flourishing business.

Every now and then we come upon a very spacious and well-lighted room, with gaudy candelabras of Bohemian glass, and a large steaming samovar. This is a tea-shop. There

are plenty of men in it, in green or brown or blue long coats, and all squatting lazily, cross-legged, sipping tea from tiny glasses and being helped to sugar from a large tray containing a mountain of it.

The fruit and vegetable bazaar is always a feature of Persian city markets, water-melons, cucumbers, grapes, apples, pomegranates, almonds and walnuts playing a prominent part in the various displays. Then there is the retailer of peeled walnuts, a man who wears a red cap and green coat, and who sells his goods spread on a brass tray. The walnuts as soon as peeled from their skin are thrown into a large basin full of water, and when properly washed are spread on the tray to dry, ready for consumption.

The walnut man is generally a character. He keeps his stall open even at night, when other shops are closed, and has plenty to say to all the passers-by on the merits of his walnuts.

To enumerate all one sees in the bazaar would take a volume to itself, but on glancing through we see the excited auctioneer in his white turban calling out figures on an ascending scale, and tapping on a piece of wood when a sufficient sum is offered and no more bids are forthcoming. He has assistants showing round the various articles as they are being sold,—umbrellas, tooth-brushes, mirrors, knives, etc.

The pipe shops are small—with black and red and blue earthenware cups for the *kalian*. There is not much variety in the shape of the

pipes except that some are made to be used in the joined hands as a draw-pipe for the smoke, the cup being held between the thumbs. Others, the majority of them, are intended for the top part of the kalia.

The barber's shop is a quaint one, remarkably clean with whitewashed walls and a brick floor. Up to some five feet along the walls is nailed a cloth, usually red, against which the customers rest their heads while being shaved. Hung upon the walls are scissors of all sizes, razors, and various other implements such as forceps for drawing teeth, sharp lancets for bleeding, the knives used for the operation of circumcision, and a variety of wooden combs and branding irons.

Yes, the Persian barber has multifarious occupations. He is surgeon, dentist and masseur, besides being an adept with comb and razor. He is—like his brother of the West—an incessant talker, and knows all the scandal of the town. While at work he has a bowl of clean water by his side which he uses on the patient's face or top of the skull and neck, which are in male Persians all clean-shaved. No soap is used by typical Persian barbers. Their short razors, in wooden cases, are stropped on the barber's arm, or occasionally leg, and are quite sharp.

The younger folks of Persia shave the top of the skull leaving long locks of hair at the side of the head, which are gracefully pushed over the ear and left hanging long behind, where they are cut in a straight horizontal line round

the neck. This fashion is necessitated by the custom in Persia of never removing the heavy headgear. The elder people, in fact, shave every inch of the scalp, but balance this destruction of hair by growing a long beard, frequently dyed bright red or jet black with henna and indigo.

The bread-shops of Persia are quaint, a piece of bread being sometimes as big as a small blanket and about as thick. These huge flat loaves are hung up on slanting shelves. In Central and Southern Persia, however, the smaller kind of bread is more commonly used, not unlike an Indian *chapati*. A ball of flour paste is well fingered and pawed until it gets to a semi-solid consistency. It is then flung several times from one palm of the hand into the other, after which it is spread flat with a roller upon a level stone slab. A few indentations are made upon its face with the end of the baker's fingers ; it is taken up and thrown with a rapid movement upon the inner domed portion of a small oven, some three to four feet high, within which blazes a big charcoal fire. Several loaves are thus baked against the hot walls and roof of the oven, which has an aperture at the top, and when properly roasted and beginning to curl and fall they are seized with wonderful quickness and brought out of the oven. Gloves on the hands and a cover over the baker's face are necessary to prevent burns and asphyxia from the escaping gases of the charcoal from the aperture over which the man must lean every time.

In the bazaars of large cities one finds every

now and then large caravanserais, handsome courts with a tank of water in the centre and shops all round. It is here that wholesale dealers and traders have their premises, and that caravans are accommodated on their arrival with goods. There are generally trees planted all round these courts to shade the animals and buyers, and often a high and broad platform or verandah all round, where the goods are spread for inspection. Some of the richer caravanserais are quite handsome, with neat latticed windows and doors. The walls are painted white. The court is crammed with tired camels, mules, beggars and loafers.

The camel men squat in one corner to smoke their pipes and eat their bread, while the merchants form another ring up above on the verandah, where prices are discussed at the top of their voices, a crowd of ever-to-be-found loafers taking active part in the discussion.

On a Friday, the day of rest of the Mahommedan, the bazaar, so crowded on other days, is absolutely deserted. All the shops—if a hatter or two be excepted—are barricaded with heavy wooden shutters and massive padlocks of local or Russian make. Barring a dog or two either lying asleep along the wall, or scraping a heap of refuse in the hope of satisfying hunger—there is hardly a soul walking about. Attracted by a crowd in the distance, one finds a fanatic gesticulating like mad and shouting at the top of his voice before an admiring crowd of ragamuffins squatting round him in a circle.

On these holidays, when the streets are clear, the effect of the columns of sunlight pouring down from the small circular apertures from each dome of the arcade, and some twenty feet apart, is very quaint. It is like a long colonnade of brilliant light in the centre of the otherwise dark, muddy-looking, long, dirty tunnel. At noon, when the sun is on the meridian, these sun columns are, of course, almost perfectly vertical, but not so earlier in the morning or later in the afternoon.

CHAPTER XXXI

A carpet factory—Children at work—The process of carpet-making—Foreign influence in the design—Aniline dyes—"Ancient carpets" manufactured to-day—Types of carpets—Kerman carpets—Isfahan silk carpets—Kurdistan rugs—Birjand and Sultanabad carpets—Carpets made by wandering tribes—Jewellers—Sword-makers and gunsmiths—Humming birds.

A VISIT to a carpet factory proves interesting. The horses must be left, for it is necessary to squeeze through a low and narrow door in order to enter the shed where the carpets are made.

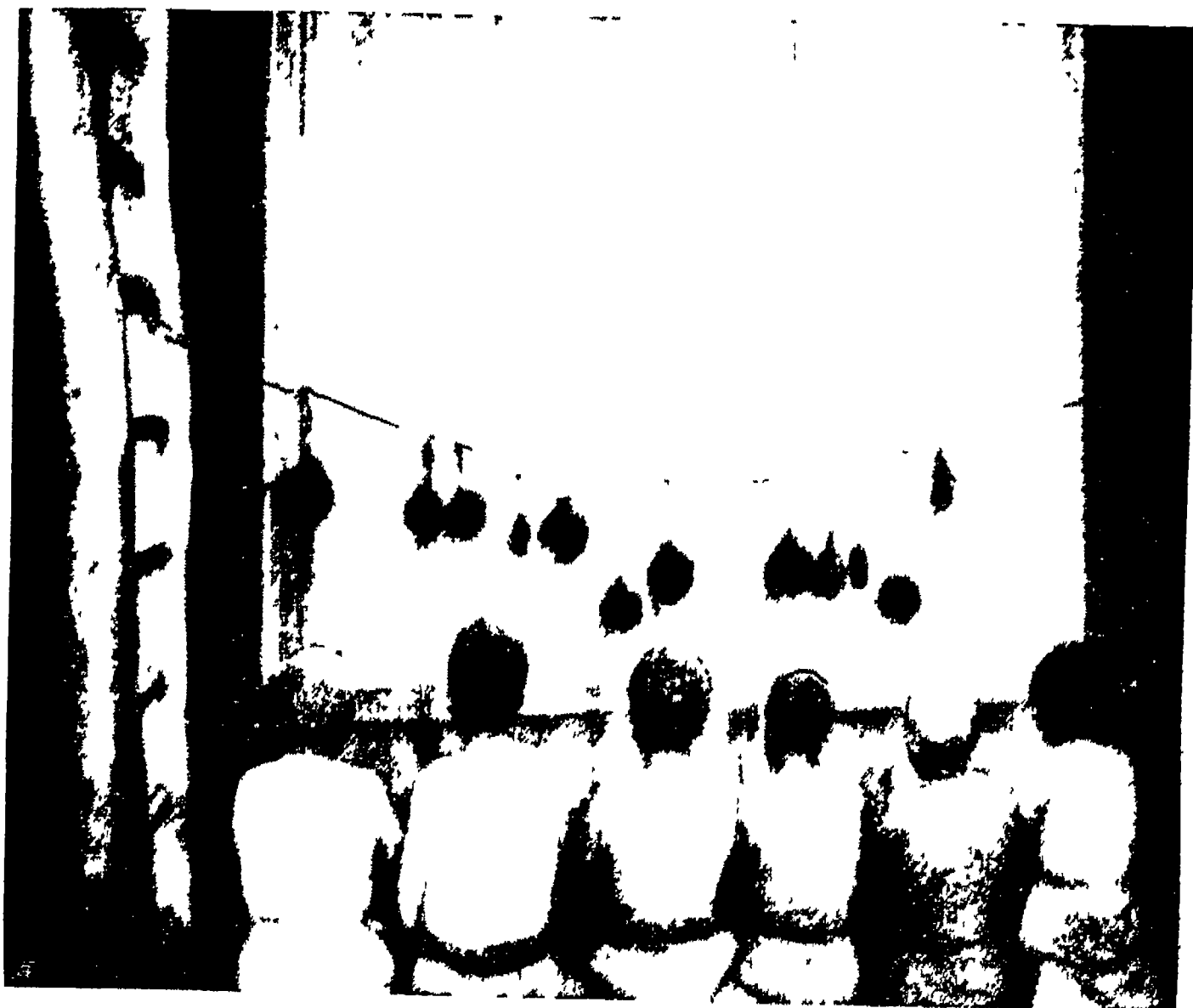
Every one is familiar with the intricate and gorgeous designs of Persian carpets, and one imagines that only veteran skilful artisans can tackle such artistic work. One cannot, therefore, help almost collapsing with surprise on seeing mere children from the age of six to ten working away at the looms with a quickness and ease that makes one feel very small.

In badly lighted and worse ventilated rooms, they sit perched in long rows on benches at various altitudes from the floor, according to the progression and size of the carpet, the web of which is spread tight vertically in front of them. Occasionally when the most difficult patterns are

executed, or for patterns with European innovations in the design, a coloured drawing is hung up above the workers ; but usually there is nothing for them to go by, except that a superintendent—an older boy—sings out the stitches in a monotonous cadence. A row of coloured balls of the various coloured threads employed in the design hang from the loom just within reach of the boys' hands.

The process of carpet-making is extremely simple, consisting merely of a series of twisted—not absolutely knotted—coloured worsted threads, each passing round one of the main threads of the foundation web. The catching-up of each consecutive vertical thread in the web, inserting the coloured worsted, giving it the twist that makes it remain in its position, and cutting it to the proper length, is done so quickly by the tiny, supple fingers of the children that it is impossible to see how it is done at all until one requests them to do it slowly for one's benefit. After each horizontal row of twisted threads, a long horizontal thread is interwoven, and then the lot is beaten down with a heavy iron comb with a handle to it, not unlike a huge hair-brush cleaner. There are different modes of twisting the threads, and this constitutes the chief characteristic of carpets made in one province or another.

The labour involved in their manufacture is enormous, and some carpets take several years to manufacture. The children employed are made to work very hard at the looms—seldom less



BOYS WEAVING A CARPET



COTTON CLEANERS.

than twelve or fourteen hours a day—and the exertion upon their memory to remember the design, which has taken them several months to learn by heart, is great. The constant strain on the eyes, which have to be kept fixed on each successive vertical thread so as not to pick up the wrong one, is very injurious to their sight. Many of the children of the factories I visited were sore-eyed, and there was hardly a poor mite who did not rub his eyes with the back of his hand when I asked him to suspend work for a moment. The tension upon their pupils must be enormous in the dim light.

Although made in a primitive method, the carpet weaving of Persia is about the only manufacture that deserves a first-class place in the industries of Iran. The carpets still have a certain artistic merit, although already contaminated to no mean extent by European commerciality. Instead of the beautiful and everlasting vegetable dyes which were formerly used for the worsted and silks, and the magnificent blue, reds, greens, greys and browns, ghastly aniline dyed threads—raw and hurtful to the eye—are very commonly used now. Also, of the carpets for export to Europe and America the same care is not taken in the manufacture as in the ancient carpets, and the bastard design is often shockingly vulgarised to appease the inartistic buyer.

But even with all these faults, Persian carpets, if not to the eye of an expert, for all general purposes are on the whole better than those of

any other manufacture. They have still the great advantage of being made entirely by hand instead of by machinery. It is not unwise, before buying a Persian carpet, to rub it well with a white cloth. If it is aniline-dyed, some of the colour will come off, but if the old Persian dyes have been used no mark should remain on the cloth. However, even without resorting to this, it must be a very poor eye indeed that cannot recognise at once the terrible raw colours of aniline from the soft, delicious tones of vegetable dyes, which time can only soften but never discolour.

To manufacture "ancient carpets" is one of the most lucrative branches of modern Persian carpet-making. The new carpets are spread in the bazaar, in the middle of the street where it is most crowded, and trampled upon for days or weeks, according to the age required, foot-passengers and their donkeys, mules and camels making a point of treading on it in order to "add age" to the manufacturer's goods. When sufficiently worn down the carpet is removed, brushed, and eventually sold for double or treble its actual price owing to its antiquity!

There are some thirty different types of carpets in Persia. The Kerman carpets are, to my mind, the most beautiful I saw in Persia, in design, colour and softness. They seem more original and graceful, with conventional plant, flower and bird representations of delicate and very varied tints, and not so much geometrical design about them as is the case in the majority of Persian carpets.

Less successful, in fact quite ugly, but quaint, are those in which very large and ill-proportioned figures are represented. One feels Arab influence very strongly in a great many of the Kerman designs. They say that Kerman sheep have extremely soft and silky hair, and also that the Kerman water possesses some chemical qualities which are unsurpassable for obtaining most perfect tones of colour with the various dyes.

The principal carpet factory is in the Governor's Palace, where old designs are faithfully copied, and really excellent results obtained. The present Governor, H. E. Ala-el-Mulk, and his nephew take particular interest in the manufacture, and devote much attention to the carpets, which retain the ancient native characteristics, and are hardly contaminated by foreign influence.

The Isfahan silk carpets are also very beautiful, but not quite so reposeful in colour nor graceful in design. Those of Kurdistan are principally small prayer rugs, rather vivid in colour, and much used by Mahommedans in their morning and evening salaams towards Mecca. In Khorassan, Meshed, Sultanabad, Kaian (Kain) and Birjand, some very thick carpets are made, of excellent wear, but not so very artistic. In the Birjand ones, brown camel-hair is a prevailing colour, used too freely as a background, and often taking away from the otherwise graceful design. Sultanabad is probably the greatest centre of carpet-making for export—nearly

every household possessing a loom. The firm of Ziegler & Co. is the most extensive buyer and exporter of these carpets. The Herat (Afghanistan) carpets are also renowned and find their way mostly to Europe.

In Shiraz and Faristan we find the long narrow rugs, as soft as velvet, and usually with geometrical designs on them. Red, blue and white are the prevalent colours.

It would be too long to enumerate all the places where good carpets are made; but Kerman-shah, Tabriz, Yezd,—in fact, nearly all big centres, make carpets, each having special characteristics of their own, although in general appearance bearing to the uninitiated more or less similar semblance.

The rugs made by the wandering tribes of South-east and South-west Persia are quaint and interesting. The Persian Beluch rugs are somewhat minute and irregular in design, deep in colour, with occasional discords of tones, but they recommend themselves by being so strongly made that it is almost impossible to wear them out. They are generally small, being woven inside their tents by the women.

In Northern Persia Turcoman carpets—the most adaptable of all for European houses—are seldom to be found now, as they are generally bought up for Russia. Dark red, warm and extremely soft is the striking note in these carpets, and the design is quite sedate.

Carpets, except the cheaper ones, are seldom sold in the bazaars nowadays. They are

purchased on the looms. The best ones are only made to order. There are, of course, a few rug shops, and occasionally an old carpet finds its way to a second-hand shop in the bazaar.

Next in attraction to carpets come the jewellers' shops. The goldsmiths' and silver-smiths' shops are not very numerous in the bazaars, nor, when we come to examine the work carefully, do they have anything really worth buying. The work is on good gold or silver of pure quality, but, with few exceptions, is generally clumsy in design and heavily executed. Figures are attempted, with most inartistic results, on silver cases and boxes. The frontage of a goldsmith's shop has no great variety of articles. Bracelets, rings, necklaces, tea and coffee pots, stands for coffee cups, and enamelled pipe heads ; a silver kalia or two, an old cigar-box full of turquoises, and another full of other precious stones—or, rather, imitations of precious stones—a little tray with forgeries of ancient coins ; that is about all. Pearls and diamonds and really valuable stones are usually concealed in neat paper parcels carried on the person by the jeweller and produced on the demand of customers.

The swordmaker and gunsmith displays many daggers and blades of local make and a great number of obsolete Belgian and Russian revolvers ; also a good many Martini and Snider rifles, which have found their way here from India. Occasionally a good modern pistol or gun is to be seen. Good rifles or revolvers find a prompt sale in Persia at enormous figures.

Nearly every man in the country carries a rifle. Had I chosen, I could have sold my rifles and revolvers twenty times over when in Persia, the sums offered me for them being two or three times what I had paid for them myself. But my rifles had been very faithful companions to me ; one, a 256· Mannlicher, had been twice in Tibet ; the other, a 30·30 take-down Winchester, had accompanied me through the Chinese campaign, and I would accept no sum for them.

One is carried back a few score of years on seeing the old rings for carrying gun-caps, and also gunpowder flasks, and even old picturesque flintlocks and matchlocks ; but still, taking things all round, it is rather interesting to note that there is a considerable number of men in Iran who are well-armed with serviceable cartridge rifles, which they can use with accuracy. Cartridge rifles are at a great premium, and although their importation is not allowed, they have found their way in considerable quantities from all sides, but principally, they tell me, from India, *via* the Gulf.

One of the notes of the bazaar is that in almost every shop one sees a cage or two with humming-birds. In the morning and evening a male member of the family takes the cage and birds out for a walk in the air and sun, for the dulness and darkness of the bazaar, although considered sufficiently good for Persians themselves, is not regarded conducive to sound health and happiness for their pets.

CHAPTER XXXII

The Grand Avenue of Isfahan—The Madrassah—Silver gates—The dome—The Palace—The hall of forty columns—Ornamentations—The picture hall—Interesting paintings—Their artistic merit—Nasr-ed-din Shah's portrait—The ceiling—The quivering minarets.

THE grand Avenue of Isfahan, much worn and out of repair, and having several lines of trees along its entire length of half a mile or so down to the river, is one of the sights of the ancient capital of Persia.

About half-way down the Avenue the famous Madrassah is to be found. It has a massive, handsome silver gate, in a somewhat dilapidated condition at present, and showing evident marks of thieving enterprise. At the entrance stand fluted, tiled columns, with alabaster bases, in the shape of vases some ten feet in height, while a frieze of beautiful blue tiles with inscriptions from the Koran, and other ornamentations, are to be admired, even in their mutilated condition, on tiles now sadly tumbling down.

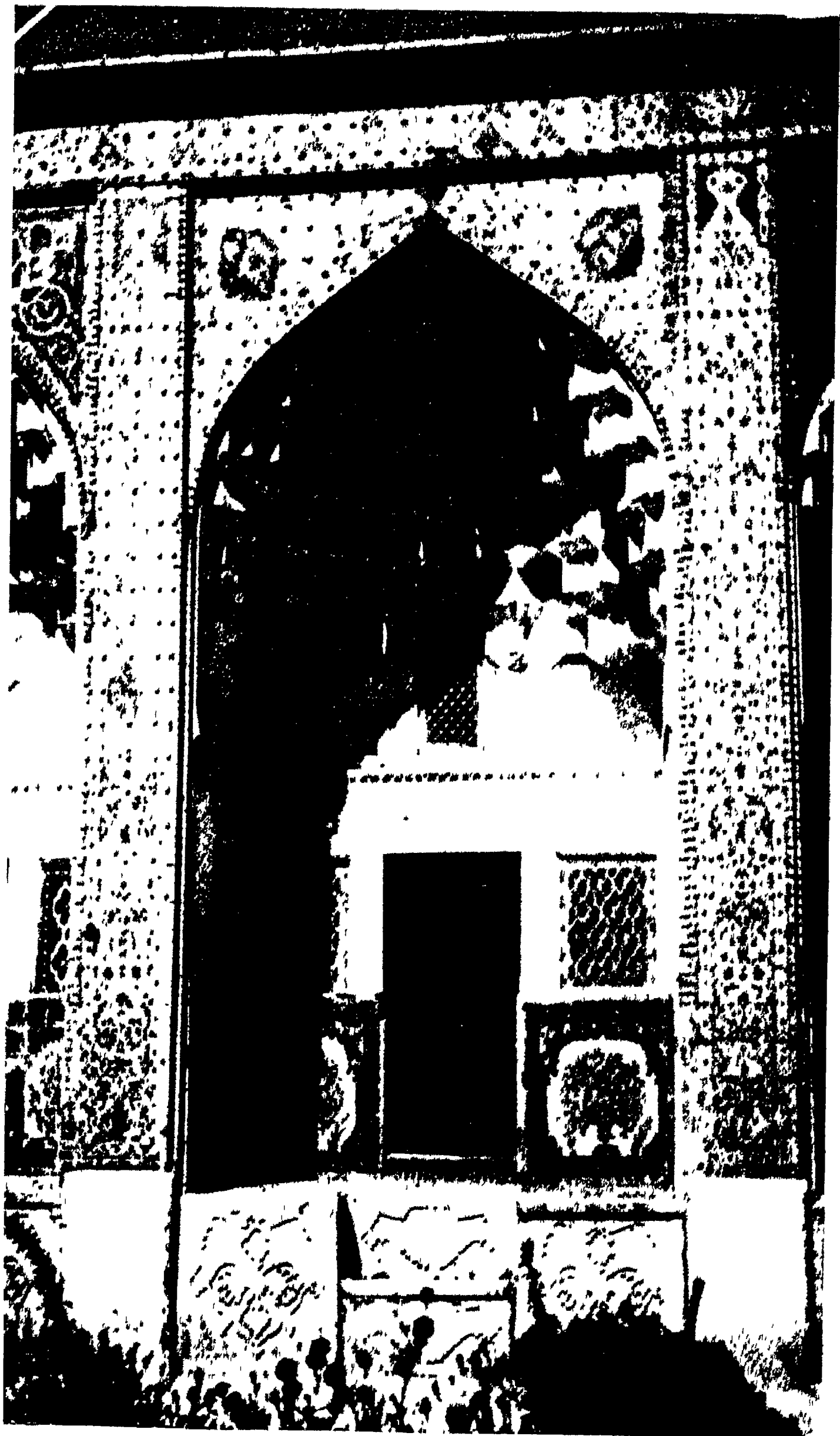
So much for the exterior. Inside, the place bears ample testimony to former grandeur and splendour, but at present hopeless decay is rampant here as everywhere else in Persia.

The Madrassah is attributed to Shah Sultan Hussein, the founder of the Shrine at Kum, and some magnificent bits of this great work yet remain. One can gaze at the beautiful dome, of a superb delicate greenish tint, surmounted by a huge knob supposed to be of solid gold, and at the two most delightful minarets, full of grace in their lines and delicately refined in colour, with lattice work at their summit.

In the courts and gardens are some fine old trees, amid a lot of uncouth vegetation, while grass sprouts out between the slabs of stone on the paths and wherever it should not be ; the walls all round, however, are magnificent, being built of large green tiles with ornamentations of graceful curves and the favourite leaf pattern. In other places white ornamentations, principally curves and yellow circles, are to be noticed on dark blue tiles. In some of the courts very handsome tiles with flower patterns are still in good preservation.

There are in the college 160 rooms for students to board and lodge. The buildings have two storeys and nearly all have tiled fronts, less elaborate than the minarets and dome, but quite pretty, with quaint white verandahs. When I visited the place there were only some fifty students, of all ages, from children to old men. Much time is devoted by them to theological studies and some smattering of geography and history.

One cannot leave Isfahan without visiting the old Palace.



HANDSOME DOORWAY IN THE MADRASSAH, ISFAHAN.

In a garden formerly beautiful but semi-barren and untidy now, on a pavement of slabs which are no longer on the level with one another, stands the Palace of the Twenty Columns, called of "the forty columns," probably because the twenty existing ones are reflected as in a mirror in the long rectangular tank of water extending between this palace and the present dwelling of H. E. Zil-es-Sultan, Governor of Isfahan. Distance lends much enchantment to everything in Persia, and such is the case even in this palace, probably the most tawdrily gorgeous structure in north-west Persia.

The Palace is divided into two sections, the open throne hall and the picture hall behind it. The twenty octagonal columns of the open-air hall were once inlaid with Venetian mirrors, and still display bases of four grinning lions carved in stone. But, on getting near them, one finds that the bases are chipped off and damaged, the glass almost all gone, and the foundation of the columns only remains, painted dark-red. The lower portion of the column, for some three feet, is ornamented with painted flowers, red in blue vases. The floor under the colonnade is paved with bricks, and there is a raised platform for the throne, reached by four stone steps.

There is a frieze here of graceful although conventional floral decoration with gold leaves. In the wall are two windows giving light to two now empty rooms. The end central receptacle or niche is gaudily ornamented with Venetian looking-glasses cut in small triangles, and it has

a pretty ceiling with artichoke-leaf pattern capitals in an upward crescendo of triangles.

The ceiling above the upper platform is made entirely of mirrors with adornments in blue and gold and glass, representing the sky, the sun, and golden lions. Smaller suns also appear in the ornamentation of the frieze. The ceiling above the colonnade and the beams between the columns are richly ornamented in blue, grey, red, and gold. This ceiling is divided into fifteen rectangles, the central panel having a geometrical pattern of considerable beauty, in which, as indeed throughout, the figure of the sun is prominent.

The inner hall must have been a magnificent room in its more flourishing days. It is now used as a storeroom for banners, furniture, swords, and spears, piled everywhere on the floor and against the walls. One cannot see very well what the lower portion of the walls is like, owing to the quantity of things amassed all round, and so covered with dust as not to invite removal or even touch ; but there seems to be a frieze nine feet high with elaborate blue vases on which the artist called into life gold flowers and graceful leaves.

The large paintings are of considerable interest apart from their historical value. In the centre, facing the entrance door, we detect Nadir Shah, the Napoleon of Persia, the leader of 80,000 men through Khorassan, Sistan, Kandahar and Cabul. He is said to have crossed from Afghanistan through the Khyber Pass to

Peshawar, and from there to Delhi, where his presence led to a scene of loot and carnage. But to him was certainly due the extension of the Persian boundary to the Indus towards the East and to the Oxus on the North. In the picture he is represented on horseback with a great following of elephants and turbaned figures.

To the right we have a fight, in which Shah Ismail, who became Shah of Persia in 1499, is the hero, and a crowd of Bokhara warriors and Afghans the secondary figures. Evidently the painting is to commemorate the great successes obtained by Ismail in Khorassan, Samarkand and Tashkend.

The third is a more peaceful scene—a Bokhara dancing girl performing before Shah Tamasp, eldest of four sons of Ismail and successor to his throne. The Shah is represented entertaining the Indian Emperor Humaiyun in 1543. The lower portion of this picture is in good preservation, but the upper part has been patched up with hideous ornamentations of birds and flowers on red ground.

Over the door Shah Ismail, wearing a white turban, is represented riding a white horse and carrying a good supply of arrows. The Shah is in the act of killing a foe, and the painting probably represents one of his heroic deeds at the battle of Khoi against Salim.

To the right of the door there is a picture of dancing and feasting, with Shah Abbas offering drink in sign of friendship to Abdul Mohmek Khan Osbek.

Finally, to the left of the front door we have pictorially the most pleasing of the whole series, another scene of feasting, with the youthful figure of Shah Abbas II. (died 1668), a man of great pluck, but unfortunately given to drunkenness and licentious living, which developed brutal qualities in him. It was he who blinded many of his relations by placing red-hot irons in front of their eyes. Considering this too lenient a punishment he ordered their eyes to be extracted altogether. We see him now, sitting upon his knees, garbed in a red tunic and turban. In the foreground a most graceful dancing-girl, in red and green robes, with a peculiar waistband, and flying locks of hair. The artist has very faithfully depicted the voluptuous twist of her waist, much appreciated by Persians in dancing, and he has also managed to infuse considerable character into the musicians, the guitar man and the followers of the Shah to the left of the picture, as one looks at it, and the tambourine figure to the right. Fruit and other refreshments lie in profusion in vessels on the floor, elaborately painted. This picture is rectangular, and is probably not only the most artistic but the best preserved of the lot.

Great labour and patience in working out details have been the aim of the artists of all these pictures, rather than true effects of nature, and the faces, hands, and poses are, of course, as in most Persian paintings, conventionalized and absolutely regardless of proportion, perspective, fore-shortening or atmospherical influence or



ONE OF ZIL-ES-SULTAN'S EUNUCHS.



THE "HALL OF THE FORTY COLUMNS," ISFAHAN.

action—generally called aerial perspective. The objection, common in nearly all countries, England included, to shadows on the faces is intensified a thousand-fold in Persian paintings, and handicaps the artist to no mean degree in his attempts to give relief to his figures. Moreover, the manipulation and concentration of light, and the art of composing a picture are not understood in old Persian paintings, and the result is that it is most difficult to see a picture as an *ensemble*. The eye roams all over the painting, attracted here by a patch of brilliant yellow, there by another equally vivacious red, here by some bright detail, there by something else ; and like so many ghosts in a haunted room peep out the huge, black, almond-shaped eyes, black-bearded heads, all over the picture, standing like prominent patches out of the plane they are painted on.

The pictures are, nevertheless, extremely interesting, and from a Persian's standpoint magnificently painted. Such is not the case with the modern and shocking portrait of Nasr-ed-din Shah, painted in the best oil colours in European style, his Majesty wearing a gaudy uniform with great wealth of gold and diamonds. This would be a bad painting anywhere in Persia or Europe.

The ceiling of this hall is really superb. It has three domes, the centre one more lofty than the two side ones. The higher dome is gilt, and is most gracefully ornamented with a refined leaf pattern and twelve gold stars, while the

other two cupolas are blue with a similar leaf ornamentation in gold. There is much quaint irregularity in the geometrical design of the corners, shaped like a kite of prettily-arranged gold, blue and green, while other corners are red and light blue, with the sides of green and gold of most delicate tones. These are quite a violent contrast to the extravagant flaming red patches directly over the paintings.

The hall is lighted by three windows at each end near the lower arch of the side domes, and three further double windows immediately under them. There is one main entrance and three exits (one large and two small) towards the throne colonnade.

Through narrow lanes, along ditches of dirty water, or between high mud walls, one comes six miles to the west of Isfahan to one of the most curious sights of Persia,—the quivering minarets above the shrine and tomb of a saint. These towers, according to Persians, are at least eight centuries old.

Enclosed in a rectangular wall is the high sacred domed tomb, and on either side of the pointed arch of the Mesjid rise towards the sky the two column-like minarets, with quadrangular bases. A spiral staircase inside each minaret, just wide enough to let a man through, conveys one to the top, wherein four small windows are to be found. By seizing the wall at one of the apertures and shaking it violently an unpleasant oscillation can be started, and continues of its own accord, the minaret diverging from the

perpendicular as much as two inches on either side. Presently the second minaret begins to vibrate also in uniformity with the first, and the vibration can be felt along the front roof-platform between the two minarets, but not in other parts of the structure. A large crack by the side of one of the minarets which is said to have existed from time immemorial foretells that some day or other minarets and front wall will come down, but it certainly speaks well for the elasticity of minarets of 800 years ago that they have stood up quivering so long.

The minarets are not very high, some thirty-five feet above the roof of the Mesjid, or about seventy-five feet from the ground. The whole structure, of bricks and mud, is—barring the dangerous crack—still in good preservation. On the outside, the minarets are tiled in a graceful, geometrical transverse pattern of dark and light blue.

A visit to the sacred shrine of the quivering minarets has miraculous powers—say the Persians—of curing all diseases or protecting one against them, hence the pilgrimage of a great number of natives afflicted with all sorts of complaints. Beggars in swarms are at the entrance waiting, like hungry mosquitoes, to pounce upon the casual visitor or customary pleasure-seeker of Isfahan, for whom this spot is a favourite resort.

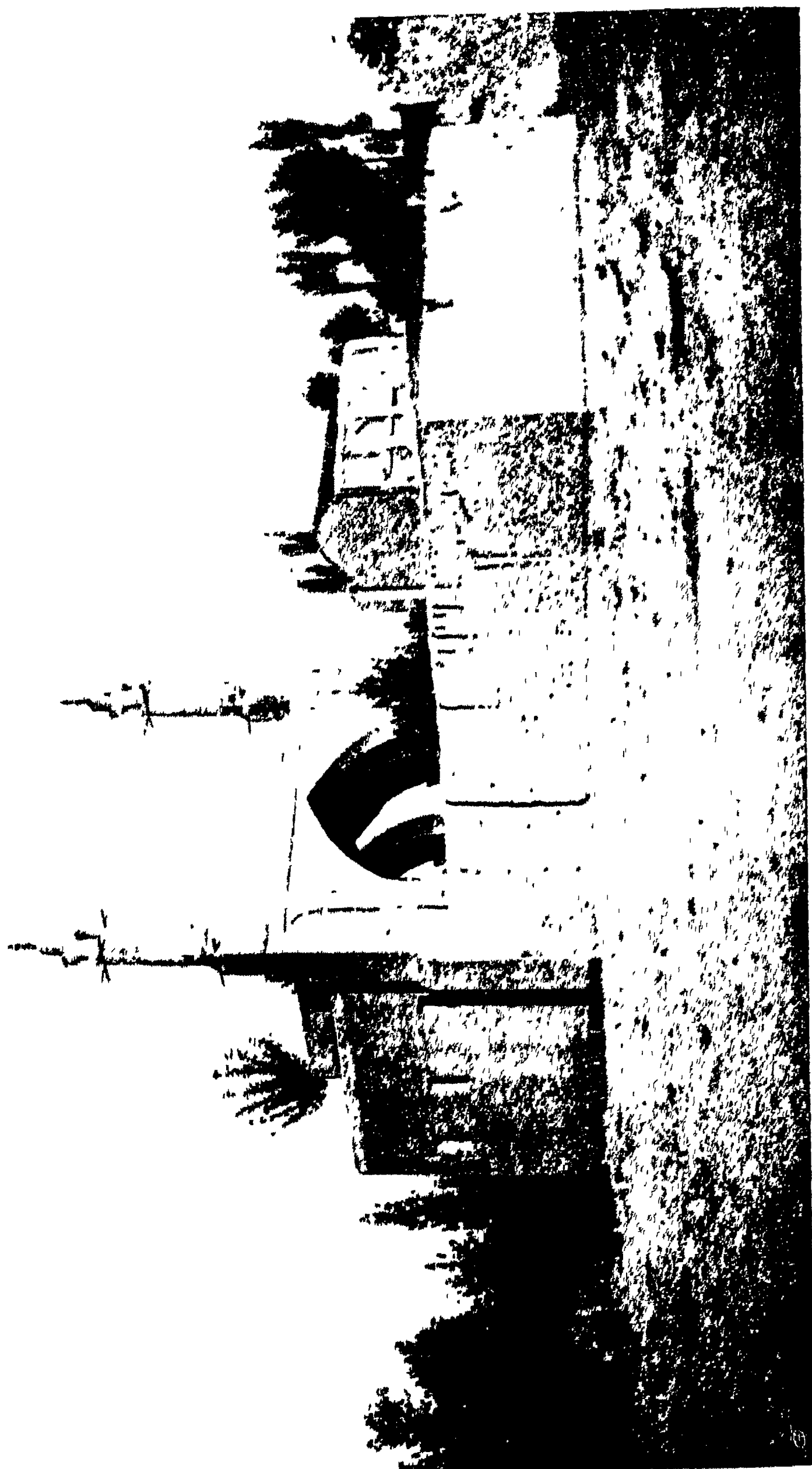
CHAPTER XXXIII

Isfahan the commercial heart of Persia—Dangers of maps in argument—Bandar Abbas—The possibility of a Russian railway to Bandar Abbas—Bandar Abbas as a harbour—The caravan road to Bandar Abbas—Rates of transport—Trade—British and Russian influence—Shipping—A Russian line of steamers—Customs under Belgian officials—Lingah—Its exports and imports.

ISFAHAN is for England the most important city, politically and commercially, in Western Persia. It is the central point from which roads radiate to all parts of the Shah's Empire. It is the commercial heart, as it were, of Persia, and the future preponderance of Russian or British influence in Isfahan will settle the balance in favour of one or the other of the two countries and the eventual preponderance in the whole of Western Iran.

Khorassan and Sistan stand on quite a different footing, being severed from the West by the great Salt Desert, and must be set apart for the moment and dealt with specially.

A reliable map ought to be consulted in order to understand the question properly, but it should be remembered that it is ever dangerous to base arguments on maps alone in discussing either



political or commercial matters. Worse still is the case when astoundingly incorrect maps such as are generally manufactured in England are in the hands of people unfamiliar with the real topography and resources of a country.

To those who have travelled it is quite extraordinary what an appalling mass of nonsensical rubbish can be supplied to the public by politicians, by newspaper penny-a-liners, and by home royal geographo-parasites at large, who base their arguments on such unsteady foundation. It is quite sufficient for some people to open an atlas and place their fingers on a surface of cobalt blue paint in order to select strategical harbours, point out roads upon which foreign armies can invade India, trade routes which ought to be adopted in preference to others, and so on, regardless of sea-depth, currents, winds, shelter, and climatic conditions. In the case of roads for invading armies, such small trifles as hundreds of miles of desert, impassable mountain ranges, lack of water, and no fuel, are never considered ! These are only small trifles that do not signify—as they are not marked on the maps—the special fancy of the cartographer for larger or smaller type in the nomenclature making cities and villages more or less important to the student, or the excess of ink upon one river course rather than another, according to the cartographer's humour, making that river quite navigable, notwithstanding that in reality there may not be a river nor a city nor village at all. We have flaming examples of this in our Government maps of Persia,

I myself have had an amusing controversy in some of the London leading papers with no less a person than the Secretary of a prominent Geographical Society, who assured the public that certain well-known peaks did not exist because he could not find them (they happened to be there all the same) on his map !

Such other trifles as the connecting of lakes by imaginary rivers to maintain the reputation of a scientific impostor, or the building of accurate maps (*sic*) from badly-taken photographs—the direction of which was not even recorded by the distinguished photographers—are frauds too commonly perpetrated on the innocent public by certain so-called scientific societies, to be here referred to. Although these frauds are treated lightly, the harm they do to those who take them seriously and to the public at large, who are always ready blindly to follow anybody with sufficient bounce, is enormous.

Without going into minor details, let us take the burning question of the fast-expanding Russian influence in the south of Persia. We are assured that Russia wishes an outlet in the Persian Gulf, and suspicions are strong that her eye is set on Bandar Abbas. On the map it certainly appears a most heavenly spot for a harbour, and we hear from scribblers that it can be made into a strong naval base and turned into a formidable position. The trade from Meshed and Khorassan and Teheran, Isfahan, Yezd, and Kerman is with equal theoretical facility switched on to this place. Even allowing that Russia

should obtain a concession of this place—a most unlikely thing to be asked for or conceded while Persia remains an independent country—matters would not be as simple for Russia as the man in the street takes them to be.

It would first of all be necessary to construct a railway connecting the Trans-Caspian line with Bandar Abbas, a matter of enormous expense and difficulty, and likely enough never to be a profitable financial enterprise. The political importance is dubious. A long railway line unguarded in a foreign country could but be of little practical value. It must be remembered that Persia is a very thinly populated country, with vast tracts of land, such as the Salt Desert, almost absolutely uninhabited, and where the construction of such a railway would involve serious difficulties, owing to the lack of water for several months of the year, intense heat, shifting sands, and in some parts sudden inundations during the short rainy season.

Moreover, Bandar Abbas itself, although ideally situated on the maps, is far from being an ideal harbour. The water is shallow, and there is no safe shelter ; the heat unbearable and unhealthy. At enormous expense, of course, this spot, like almost any other spot on any coast, could be turned into a fair artificial harbour. The native town itself—if it can be honoured with such a name—consists of a few miserable mud houses, with streets in which one sinks in filth and mud. The inhabitants are the most miserable and worst ruffians in Persia, together with some

Hindoos. There is a European community of less than half-a-dozen souls.

The *British India* and other coasting steamers touch here, and therefore this has been made the starting-point for caravans to Kerman and Yezd and Sistan *via* Bam. But for Isfahan and Teheran the more direct and shorter route *via* Bushire is selected. The caravan road from Bandar Abbas to Kerman and Yezd is extremely bad and unsafe. Several times of late the track has been blocked, and caravans robbed. During 1900, and since that date, the risk of travelling on the road seems to have increased, and as it is useless for Persians to try and obtain protection or compensation from their own Government the traffic not only has been diverted when possible to other routes, principally Bushire, but the rates for transport of goods inland had at one time become almost prohibitive. In the summer of 1900, it cost 18 tomans (about £3 9s.) to convey 900 lbs. weight as far as Yezd, but in the autumn the charges rose to 56 tomans (about £10 13s.) or more than three times as much for the same weight of goods. Eventually the rates were brought down to 22 tomans, but only for a short time, after which they fluctuated again up to 28 tomans. It was with the greatest difficulty that loading camels could be obtained at all, owing to the deficiency of exports, and this partly accounted for the extortionate prices demanded. An English gentleman whom I met in Kerman told me that it was only at great expense and trouble that he was able to procure

camels to proceed from Bandar Abbas to Kerman, and even then he had to leave all his luggage behind to follow when other animals could be obtained.

According to statistics furnished by the British Vice-Consul, the exports of 1900 were half those of 1899, the exact figures being £202,232 for 1899; £102,671 for 1900. Opium, which had had the lead by far in previous years, fell from £48,367 to £4,440. Raw cotton, however, not only held its own but rose to a value of £18,692 from £6,159 the previous year. In the years 1888, 1889, 1890, and 1891 the exports of raw cotton were abnormal, and rose to about £35,000 in 1890, the highest record during the decade from 1888 to 1897.

Large quantities of henna and opium are also exported from this spot, as it is the principal outlet of the Kerman and Yezd districts, but the trade may be said to be almost entirely in British hands at present, and Russian influence so far is infinitesimal.

We find that, next to opium, fruit and vegetables, especially dates, constitute a large part of the export, then wool, drugs and spices, salt, carpets and woollen fabrics, piece goods, silk (woven), seeds, skins and tanned leather, wheat and cereals, and cotton raw and manufactured. Perfumery—rose-water—was largely exported from 1891 to 1896. The exportation of tobacco seems to decrease, although it is now beginning to look up again a little. Dyes and colouring substances are also exported.

The value of imports is very nearly double that of the exports. Cotton goods have the lead by a long way, then come tea, and piece goods, loaf-sugar, powdered sugar, indigo, metals, wheat and cereals, spices, drugs, wool and woollen fabrics, jute fabrics, cheap cutlery, coffee, tobacco, mules, horses, donkeys, etc., in the succession enumerated.

It is pleasant to find that the shipping increases yearly at Bandar Abbas, and that, second only to Persian vessels, the number of British sailing vessels entering Bandar Abbas in 1900 was nearly double (48) of the previous year (28). Steamers were in the proportion of 101 to 64. Although in number of sailing vessels the Persians have the priority, because of the great number of small crafts, the total tonnage of the Persian vessels was 5,320 tons against 75,440 tons in 1899, and 139,164 tons in 1900 British.

Turkish steamers occasionally ply to Bandar Abbas and Muscat and also Arab small sailing crafts.

It is rather curious to note that in 1899 the imports into Bandar Abbas came entirely from India, Great Britain and France, and in a small measure from Muscat, Zanzibar, the Arab Coast, Bahrain and Persian ports, whereas the following year, 1900, the imports from India fell to less than half their previous value, from £435,261 to £204,306, and from the United Kingdom there was a diminution from £86,197 to £69,597; whereas France doubled hers in 1900 and other countries entered into competition. The

Chinese Empire, curiously enough, was the strongest, to the value of £18,419, presumably with teas, and Austria-Hungary £10,509. Germany and Turkey imported to the value of some £2,174 and £2,147 respectively. Belgium £2,254, Java £7,819, Mauritius £3,564, Muscat £692, the Canaries £637, America £600, and Arabia £494. Japan contributed to the amount of £305, Sweden £273, Italy £82, and Switzerland the modest sum of £8.

A most significant point is that Russia, with all her alleged aims and designs, only contributed to the small amount of £572. Nothing was exported from Bandar Abbas to Russia. It would appear from this that at least commercially Russia's position at Bandar Abbas was not much to be feared as late as 1900. Since then a Russian line of steamers has been established from the Black Sea to the Persian Gulf ports, but I have no accurate statistics at hand. It is said not to be a financial success.

The establishment of Customs under Belgian officials in 1900 caused some trouble at first, and may have been responsible for a portion of the falling-off in trade, but it is now agreed by everybody that the system is carried on in a fair and honest manner, preferable to the extortionate fashion employed by the former speculators who farmed out the Customs.

I rather doubt whether Russia's aim is even directed towards Lingah, to the south-west of Bandar Abbas, as has been supposed by others. Although this port would afford a deeper and

better anchorage and a breakwater, it has the same difficulties of approach by land from Russia as Bandar Abbas—in fact, greater ones, being further south.

Lingah is a more prosperous port than Bandar Abbas, its exports being roughly two-thirds larger than those of Bandar Abbas, and its imports one-third in excess. In value the export and import of pearls form the chief item, next come wheat and cotton. Very little tea is disembarked at Lingah, but dates and firearms were landed in considerable quantities, especially in 1897. Coffee and tobacco were more in demand here than at Bandar Abbas, and metals were largely imported. White sea-shells found their way in huge quantities to Beluchistan, where the women use them for decorating their persons. Bangles and necklaces are made with them, and neckbands for the camels, horses and mules, as well as ornamentations on the saddle bags. With these two exceptions the imports and exports of Lingah are made up of larger quantities of articles similar to those brought to and from Bandar Abbas.

CHAPTER XXXIV

Mahommerah—Where Russia's aims are directed—Advantages of Mahommerah—The navigation of the Karun River—Traffic—Rates on the Ahwaz-Isfahan track—The Government's attitude—Wheat—Russian influence—Backhtiari Chiefs—Up and down river trade—Gum—Cotton goods—Sugar—Caravan route—Steamers—Disadvantages of a policy of drift—Russian enterprise.

So much for Bandar Abbas and Lingah. I will not touch on Bushire, too well known to English people, but Mahommerah may have a special interest to us, and also to Russia. It is rather curious to note that it has never struck the British politician nor the newspaper writer that Russia's aims, based usually on sound and practical knowledge, might be focussed on this port, which occupies the most favourable position in the Persian Gulf for Russia's purposes. Even strategically it is certainly as good as Bandar Abbas, while commercially its advantages over the latter port are a thousandfold greater.

These advantages are a navigable river, through fertile country, instead of an almost impassable, waterless desert, and a distance as the crow flies from Russian territory to Mahommerah one-third shorter than from Bandar Abbas. A

railway through the most populated and richest part of Persia could easily be constructed to Ahwaz. The climate is healthy though warm.

Another most curious fact which seems almost incredible is that the British Government, through ignorance or otherwise, by a policy of drift may probably be the cause of helping Russia to reap the benefit of British enterprise on the Karun River, in the development of which a considerable amount of British capital has already been sunk. The importance, political and commercial, of continuing the navigation of the Karun River until it does become a financial success—which it is bound to be as soon as the country all round it is fully developed—is too obvious for me to write at length upon it, but it cannot be expected that a private company should bear the burden and loss entirely for the good of the mother country without any assistance from the home Government.

The British firm, who run the steamers, with much insight and praiseworthy enterprise improved the existing caravan track from Isfahan to Ahwaz on the Karun River, the point up to which the river is navigable by steamers not drawing more than four feet. They built two fine suspension bridges, one over the Karun at Godar-i-Balutak and the other, the Pul-Amarat (or Built-bridge) constructed on the side of an ancient masonry bridge. The track has thus been rendered very easy and every assistance was offered to caravans, while a regular service of river steamers plied from Mahommerah to

Ahwaz, to relieve the traffic by water. The s.s. *Blosse Lynch*, 250 tons, was sent up at first, but was too large, so the s.s. *Malamir*, 120 tons, was specially built for the Karun navigation.

Matters were very prosperous at first, until many obstacles came in the way. The road has been open to traffic some three years. The first year traffic was healthy and strong, but the second year, owing to famine in Arabistan, the traffic suddenly dropped and nothing would induce muleteers to travel by that route. Although they were offered as much as 100 (£2) to 110 krans (£2 4s) per load from Isfahan to Ahwaz, a distance of 17 stages—277 miles—they preferred to take 70 krans (£1 9s 2d) to Bushire, a journey of about 30 stages, over a distance of 510 miles.

The caravan men in Persia are curious people to deal with, and it takes a very long time to imbue their minds with new ideas. In the case of the Ahwaz road it was partly conservatism and fear instigated by the Mullahs that prevented their taking loads to the steamers.

It was fully expected that the route could not pay its way for at least five years from its inauguration, and the British Government—which at that time seemed to understand the value of the undertaking—agreed to give in equal shares with the Government of India a collective guarantee against losses up to £3,000 for the first two years, then of £2,000 for five years. For some unaccountable reason the Government of India, which the scheme mostly concerned,

dropped out, and the guarantee was further reduced to £1,000 payable by the home Government only. As a result of this the steamers have been run since at a considerable loss, and had it not been for the patriotism of Lynch Brothers, and the prospects to which they still cling of a successful issue, the navigation of the Karun would have already come to an untimely end.

The principal article of export of any importance was wheat, grown in enormous quantities in the fertile plains of Arabistan ; and were its export legal, the export of grain would be infinitely greater than the whole of the present imports. But the Persian Government unfortunately prohibited the export of grain from Persia, nominally to allay and prevent famine in the country, in fact to enrich local governors by permitting illicit export. Consequently, the peasants could not sell their produce in the open market and had to sell it, accepting what they could get from speculators at about half the actual value. This led to the discontinuance of the cultivation of wheat. When for three years the exportation of grain was permitted, the acreage under cultivation was enormous and yielded very large returns, but as soon as the prohibition was set in force it dwindled year by year until it became approximately the fifth part of what it originally was. On the top of all this a severe drought occurred and a famine resulted.

It seems very likely that the British Government may now fall out also and stop the meagre

guarantee of £1,000. This may have disastrous results, for it cannot be expected that a private firm will continue the navigation of the Karun at a great loss. This is, in a few words, what it may lead to. Should the British abandon the work already done, Russia will step in—she has had her eye upon the Karun more than upon any other spot in Persia—and reap the benefit of the money and labour that has been spent by us. In the plain of Arabistan Russian influence is not yet very far advanced, but among the Backhtiaris it is spreading fast. Intrigue is rampant. The Russian agents endeavour to get the tribesmen into disgrace with the Government and they succeed to a great extent in their aim.

Isphandiar Khan, who has the title of Sirdar Assad, is the head chief of the Backhtiaris, and with his cousin Sephadar keeps going the various branches of the family, but serious family squabbles are very frequent and may eventually cause division. The two above named men manage to keep all together except Hadji-Riza Kuli Khan, who is an opposing factor. He is an uncle of Isphandiar Khan, and his rancour arises from having been ousted from the chieftainship. He is said to have fallen very badly under Russian influence, and instigated his followers to rebellion, the cause being, however, put down not to family squabbles and jealousy—the true causes—but to disapproval of the new road and the influence exercised by it upon the Backhtiari country.

Only about one-fifth of foreign imports into Mahommerah find their way up the Karun River. It is certainly to be regretted that no articles direct from the United Kingdom are forced up the river. The trade with India in 1900 only amounted to some £43,062 against £30,149 the previous year, France, Turkey, and Egypt being the only other importers. The total imports into Mahommerah for transshipment to Karun ports amounted to £59,194 in 1900, and showed a considerable increase on 1899.

Piece goods find their way up the river in considerable quantities. Then loaf-sugar and soft sugar are the principal articles of import ; dates, iron, and treacle come next ; while various metals, tea and matches come last.

In regard to local commerce the river trade for 1900 was £100,437, showing an increase of £37,449 upon the trade of 1899. This ought to be regarded as satisfactory, considering the slowness of Oriental races in moving from their old grooves.

The down river trade falls very short of the up river commerce, and consists mostly of wheat, oil seeds, opium, wool, gum, flour, beans, cotton, rice, tobacco, piece goods, glue. In 1900 the decrease in the carriage of wheat was enormous, and also the trade in oil seeds. Although gum was carried down stream in much larger quantities, owing to the yield being unusually abundant, the price obtained was very poor, owing to the falling London market. Gum Tragacanth

was conveyed principally by the Isfahan-Ahwaz route. Notwithstanding all this there was an increase of £17,000 in 1900 over the trade of 1899, which shows that the route is nevertheless progressing and is worth cultivating.

Cotton goods, which are reimported from India mostly by Parsee and Jewish firms, originally come from Manchester and are in great demand. They consist of grey shirtings, prints (soft finish), lappets, imitation Turkey red, Tanjibs and jaconets. Marseilles beetroot sugar is holding its own against other cheaper sugars imported lately and finds its way to Isfahan by the Ahwaz road.

Caravans usually employ twenty days on the Ahwaz-Isfahan journey, but the distance can easily be covered in fifteen days and even less. A fortnightly steamer is run by the Euphratis and Tigris Steam Navigation Company to Ahwaz.

Mahommerah exports chiefly to India, then to Turkey, the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, the Persian Gulf ports, Egypt and France. In 1900 the exports were to the value of £115,359. The imports were similar to those of Bandar Abbas, viz. :—cotton goods, sugar, coffee, silk, iron, tea, manufactured metal, thread, spices, etc. They amounted to an aggregate sum of £281,570 in 1900, against £202,492 in 1899.¹

¹ See Diplomatic and Consular Reports, Trade of Persian Gulf for the year 1900. Foreign Office. H.M. Stationery Office.

If I have gone into details it is to show the mistake made by the British Government in letting such a valuable position, of absolute vital importance to our interest, drift slowly but surely into Russian hands. Russia's aims in the Gulf are at present concentrated on the Karun River ; our movements are closely watched, and nothing could be more probable than, that if we abandon the Karun, Russia will at once fill our place and turn the whole business into a formidable success.

The Russian Government have now granted a subsidy of £5,000 per round voyage to the Russian Steam Navigation to run three steamers a year from Odessa to Bussorah, touching at all the principal ports of the Persian Gulf. The s.s. *Kornilof* made two voyages in 1901, arriving in Bussorah in April and November. On her first voyage she landed most of her cargo in Bushire, and only conveyed 8,000 cases of petroleum and a quantity of wood for date boxes ; but on her second journey 16,500 cases of petroleum were landed at Bussorah and a further supply of wood, besides a great number of samples of Russian products, such as flour, sugar and matches. On the second return journey the *Kornilof* took back to Odessa freight for two thousand pounds from Bussorah, principally dates, a cargo which had been previously carried by British steamers to Port Said and then transhipped for the Black Sea.

The appearance of the Russian boats excited considerable interest among the natives and

merchants, both British and indigenous. Comments are superfluous on the grant given by the Russian Government to further Russian trade, and the wavering attitude of the British Government in safeguarding interests already acquired.

CHAPTER XXXV

The British Consul-General in Isfahan—Russia's influence in Southern Persia—H.R.H. Zil-es-Sultan—Departure for Yezd—Pigeon towers—A Persian telegraph line—Ghiavaz—Characteristics of the scenery—A village in ruins—Types—Saigsi—Mud dunes—Mirage—A reservoir—Kanats—Scarcity of fodder.

I ONLY halted a few days in Isfahan, during which time I was the guest of Mr. Preece, the British Consul-General. Mr. Preece's hospitality and popularity are proverbial among Europeans and natives all over Persia. A step in the right direction was taken by the British Government in making a Consulate-General in Isfahan, and another good step was that of furnishing the Consulate with a guard of mounted Indian soldiers. Prestige and outward show go much together in Persia, and no matter to what extent one's private feelings may rebel at the idea, we must make a display, I suppose.

We have in Mr. Preece a very able and intellectual officer ; a man who understands the Persians thoroughly, and a gentleman of uncommon tact and kindliness. His artistic taste has served him well, so that the Consulate and grounds have been rendered most comfortable

and delightful, and the collections of carpets and silver which he has made during his many years' residence in Persia are very interesting.

It is true that Russian influence is spreading fast towards the south, and that the establishment of a Russian Consulate in Isfahan, with its guard of Cossacks, has made considerable impression on the population, but no doubt Mr. Preece will be able to maintain British prestige high, if the Government at home show grit and enable him to do so.

It is most important, I think, to come to some sound conclusion on the policy to be followed towards Russia in Persia, either to check her advance immediately and firmly, or to come to some satisfactory agreement with her so that her interests and ours may not altogether clash ; but it cannot be impressed too often upon our minds that our present policy of drift and wavering is most disastrous to our interests. We have lost Northern Persia. Southern Persia will soon slip from our grip unless we pull up soon and open our eyes wide to what is happening.

We place too much reliance on the fact that Zil-es-Sultan, the Shah's brother and now Governor of Isfahan, was once extremely pro-British. We have a way of getting ideas into our heads and nothing will drive them out again, but we forget that things and people change in Persia as everywhere else, and what was accurate fifteen years ago may not be so now. Also it must be remembered that Zil-es-

Sultan, although in high power, does not occupy the same high position politically as before the late Shah's death. He and his family are kept under strict control of the Shah, and any pro-English ideas which they may still have are discouraged, if not promptly eradicated. His Highness's sons have been forbidden to be educated in Europe or to travel abroad, although a visit to Russia only might be allowed. Beyond the secondary power of a High Governor, Zil-es-Sultan has no other influence, and has to conform to superior orders. He is now no longer very young, and his popularity, although still very great, cannot be said to be on the increase.

While in Isfahan I had an audience of his Highness. One could not help being struck at first glance by the powerful countenance of the Prince, and the mixture of pride and worry plainly depicted on his face. He spoke very intelligently but was most guarded in his speech. One of his sons Baharam Mirza—a wonderfully clever young man, who spoke French and English fluently although he had never been out of Persia—interpreted. I was much impressed by the kindliness of the Zil-es-Sultan towards his children, and in return by the intense respect, almost fear, of these towards their father. After a pleasant visit and the usual compliments and refreshments, coffee was brought, the polite signal that the audience should come to a close. The Prince accompanied the Consul and myself to the door of the room—a most unusual compliment.



H. R. II ZIL-ES SULTAN, Governor of Isfahan

There were many soldiers, and servants and attendants with silver-topped maces who escorted us out of the grounds, where we found the Consular guard again, and returned to the Consulate.

Two days later I departed for Yezd. There is no high road between the two cities; only a mere track. No postal service and relays of horses are stationed on the track, but, by giving notice some days previous to one's departure, horses can be sent out ahead from Isfahan to various stages of the journey, until the Kashan-Nain-Yezd road is met, on which post horses can again be obtained at the Chappar Khanas. This, however, involved so much uncertainty and exorbitant expense that I preferred to make up my own caravan of mules, the first part of the journey being rather hilly.

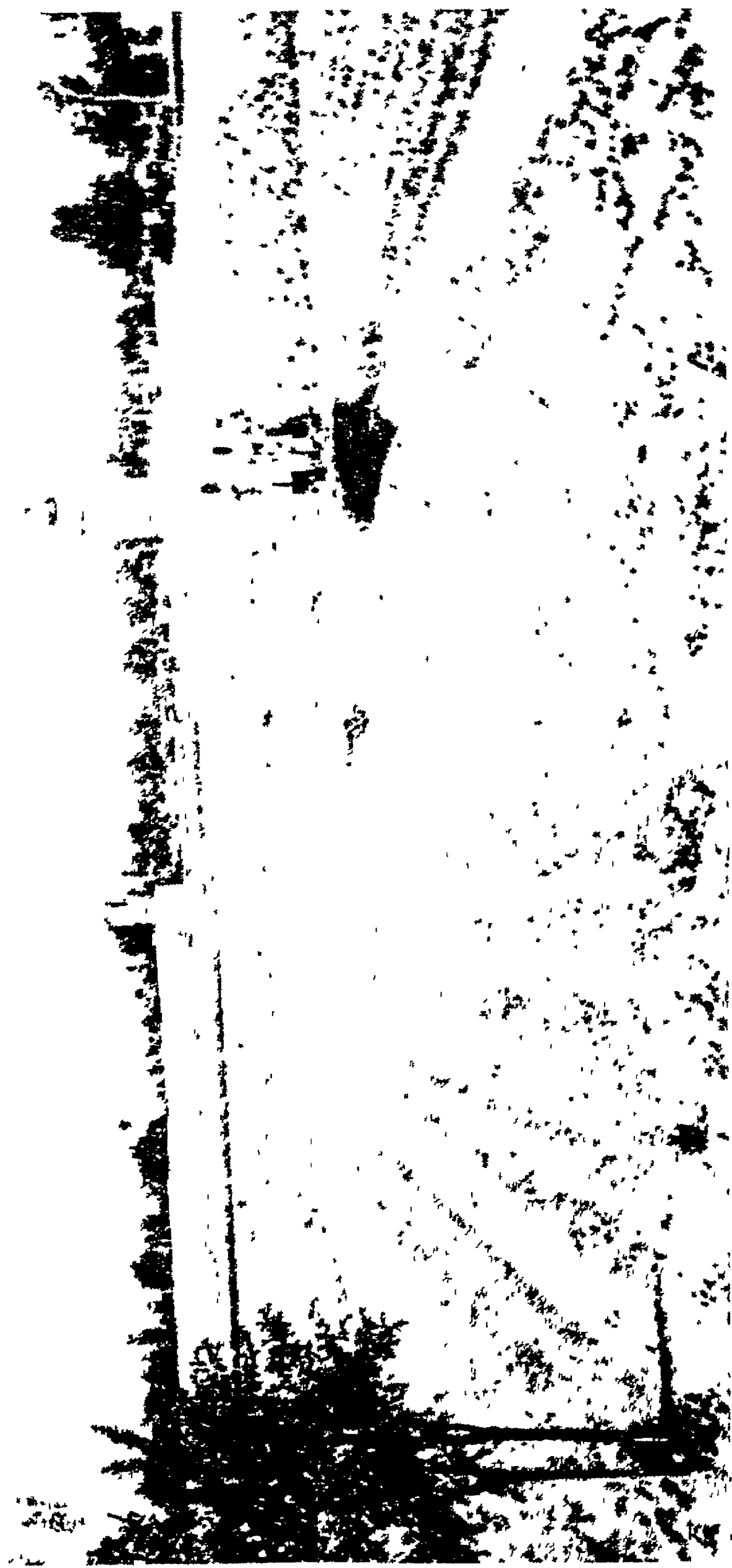
On leaving Isfahan there are mountains to the south, the Urchin range, and also to the east, very rugged and with sharply defined edges. To the north-east stand distant elevations, but nothing can be seen due north. We go through a great many ruins on leaving the city, and here, too, as in other cities of Persia, one is once more struck by the unimportant appearance of the city from a little distance off. The green dome of the Mosque, and four minarets are seen rising on the north-east, five more slender minarets like factory chimneys—one extremely high—then everything else the colour of mud.

The traffic near the city is great. Hundreds of donkeys and mules toddle along both towards

and away from the city gate. The dust is appalling. There is nothing more tantalizing than the long stretches of uninteresting country to be traversed in Persia, where, much as one tries, there is nothing to rest one's eye upon ; so it is with great relief—almost joy—that we come now to something new in the scenery, in the shape of architecture—a great number of most peculiar towers.

These are the pigeon towers—a great institution in Central Persia. They are cylindrical in shape, with castellated top, and are solidly built with massive walls. They stand no less than thirty to forty feet in height, and possess a central well in which the guano is collected—the object for which the towers are erected. A quadrangular house on the top, and innumerable small cells, where pigeons lay their eggs and breed their young, are constructed all round the tower. These towers are quite formidable looking structures, and are so numerous, particularly in the neighbourhood of Isfahan, as to give the country quite a strongly fortified appearance. The guano is removed once a year. After passing Khorasgun, at Ghiavaz—a small village—one could count as many as twenty-four of these pigeon houses.

Some amusement could be got from the way the Persian telegraph line had been laid between Isfahan and Yezd, *via* Nain. There were no two poles of the same height or shape ; some were five or six feet long, others ten or fifteen ;—some were straight, some crooked ; some of



AGRICULTURE AND PIGEON TOWERS NEAR ISFAHAN.

most irregular knobby shapes. As to the wire, when it did happen to be supported on the pole it was not fastened to an insulator, as one would expect, but merely rested on a nail, or in an indentation in the wood. For hundreds of yards at a time the wire lay on the ground, and the poles rested by its side or across it. Telegrams sent by these Persian lines, I was told, take several days to reach their destination, if they ever do reach at all, and are usually entrusted for conveyance, not to the wire, but to caravan men happening to travel in that particular direction, or to messengers specially despatched from one city to the other.

Some two farsakhs from Isfahan we went through a passage where the hills nearly meet, after which we entered a flat plain, barren and ugly. In the distance to the south-east lay a line of blackish trees, and another in front of us in the direction we were travelling, due east. Then we saw another bunch of pigeon towers.

Leaving behind the hills nearer to us to the north-west, west, and south-west, and the more distant and most fantastically shaped range to the south, my mules gradually descend into the plain. For an angle of 40° from east to S.S.E. no hills are visible to the naked eye, but there is a long range of comparatively low hills encircling us from N.N.W. to S.S.E. and N.E. of the observer, the highest points being at 80° (almost N.E.E.). To the north we have a long line of *kanats*.

Following the drunken row of telegraph poles we arrive at Gullahbad (Gulnabad)—a village in ruins. From this point for some distance the soil is covered with a deposit of salt, giving the appearance of a snow-clad landscape, in sharp contrast with the terrific heat prevailing at the time. This road is impassable during the rainy weather. As one nears the hills to the N.E. tufts of grass of an anæmic green cover the ground (altitude 5,250 feet).

Under a scorching sun we reached Saigsi (8 farsakhs from Isfahan) at six o'clock in the afternoon, and put up in the large caravanserai with two rooms up stairs and ten down below around the courtyard. The difference in the behaviour of the natives upon roads on which Europeans do not frequently travel could be detected at once here. One met with the greatest civility and simplicity of manner and, above all, honesty, which one seldom finds where European visitors are more common.

There are few countries where the facial types vary more than in Persia. The individuals of nearly each town, each village, have peculiar characteristics of their own. At Saigsi, for instance, only 32 miles from Isfahan, we find an absolutely different type of head, with abnormally large mouth and widely-expanded nostrils, the eyes wide apart, and the brow overhanging. The latter may be caused by the constant brilliant refraction of the white soil in the glare of the sun (Altitude of Saigsi 5,100 feet).

About four miles east of Saigsi and north of the track we come across five curious parallel lines of mud-heaps or dunes stretching from north to south. Each of these heaps is precisely where there is a gap in the mountain range to the north of it, and each has the appearance of having been gradually deposited there by a current passing through these gaps when the whole of this plain was the sea-bottom. These mud heaps are flat-topped and vary from 20 to 40 feet in height, the central row of all being the highest of the series. This is a grand place for wonderful effects of mirage all round us. To the W. spreads a beautiful lake in the depression of the plain—as complete an optical deception as it is possible to conceive, for in reality there is no lake at all,

Water is not at all plentiful here. One finds a reservoir made for caravans along this track. It is a tank 25 feet by 10 feet sunk deep into the ground and roofed over with a vault. The water is sent to it by means of a channel from the small village of Vartan north of it.

We gradually rise to 5,550 feet and again we have before us another beautiful effect of mirage in the shape of a magnificent lake with a village and cluster of trees apparently suspended in the air. My caravan man assures me that the village, which appears quite close by, is many miles off.

Long rows of *kanats*, ancient and modern, to the south-east warn us of the approach of a small town, and on the road plenty of skeletons

of camels, donkeys, and mules may be seen. Fodder is very scarce upon this track, and many animals have to die of starvation. Also animals caught here during the rains cannot proceed in the sinking soft ground, and eventually die.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Khupah—Sunken well—Caravanserai—Night marching—Kudeshk—The Fishark and Sara ranges—Lhas—The pass—Whirlwinds—Robbers—Fezahbad—The dangers of a telegraph wire—An accident—Six villages—Deposits of sand and gravel—Bambis—The people—Mosquitoes—A Persian house—Weaving loom—Type of natives—Clothing—Sayids.

EARLY in the afternoon Khupah (Altitude 5,920 feet) was reached, with its very large and dirty caravanserai to the west, just outside the town wall. From the roof—the only clean part of the hostelry—one obtains a good panoramic view of the town. It is built in a most irregular shape, and is encircled by a castellated mud wall with round turrets. There is a humble dome of a mosque rising somewhat higher than all the other little domes above each dwelling.

Feeble attempts at raising a bazaar have been made on different sites in the town, where bits of arcades have been erected, but there are no signs about the place of a flourishing industry or trade. The majority of houses, especially in the northern part of the city, are in ruins. The principal thoroughfare is picturesque enough, and on the occasion of my visit looked particularly attractive

to me, with its huge trays of delicious grapes. They were most refreshing to eat in the terrific heat of the day. One peculiarity of the place is that most doorways of houses are sunk—generally from one to three feet—below the level of the street.

Between the caravanserai and the city is a sunken well with flat roof and four ventilating shafts to keep the water cool. Further away, are seven more buildings—probably dead-houses—and a garden. The little range north of the city is quite low, and has in front of it a pyramidal dune—a similar deposit to those we have already noticed to the north-west in the morning on our march to this place, but much higher.

South of the town many trees and verdant gardens are visible, and to the West the immense stretch of flat—some sixty miles of it that we had travelled over from Isfahan.

For want of a better amusement I sat on the roof to watch the sunset, while Sadek cooked my dinner. The nearer hills, of a bright cobalt blue, faded into a light grey in the distance, the sky shone in a warm cadmium yellow, and beneath stretched the plain, of a dark-brown bluish colour, uninterrupted for miles and miles, were it not for one or two tumbled-down huts in the immediate foreground, and a long, snake-like track winding its way across the expanse until it lost itself in the dim distance.

Directly below, in the courtyard of the caravanserai, four camels squatted round a cloth

on which was served straw mixed with cotton seeds, that gave flavour to their meal. The camels slowly ground their food, moving their lower jaws sideways from right to left, instead of up and down as is usual in most other animals ; and some of the caravan men placidly smoked their kalians, while others packed up their bundles to make ready for their departure as soon as the moon should rise. In another corner of the courtyard my own caravan man groomed the mules, and around a big flame a little further off a crowd of admiring natives gazed open-mouthed at Sadek boiling a chicken and vegetables for my special benefit.

We were to make a night march, as the heat of the day was too great to travel in. At three in the morning, yawning and stretching our limbs when we were roused by the charvadar,¹ we got on the mules and made our departure. The cold was intense, and the wind blowing with all its might from the west. Six miles off we passed Kamalbek, then six miles further the large village of Moshkianuh in ruins, with a few green trees near it.

The plain on which we are travelling rises gently up to the village of Kudeshk at the foot of the mountain (Altitude 6,750 feet). We ascend gradually between hills to the north and south and find ourselves in another flat valley, about three quarters of a mile broad and one mile and a half long. (Altitude 7,200 feet.) We are surrounded by hills, and find two villages,

¹ Charvadar—Caravan man.

one to the east, the other to the west of the valley. The latter possesses buildings with masonry walls instead of the usual mud ones, and also masonry enclosures round wheat-fields and fruit-tree groves.

We continue to rise until the highest point of the plain is reached, 7,620 feet. Two or three smaller hamlets are found in the centre of the plain.

A second basin is found on proceeding east, with here and there miserable clusters of trees ; otherwise everything is as barren as barren could be. On the reddish hills the rocky portion shows through at the summit only, whereas the bases are enveloped in a covering of sand and salt. To the north the Fishark and Sara mountain range extends in a general direction of N.W. to S.E., and its formation is quite interesting. Due north of us the eye is attracted by a peculiar hill, a double cone, two pointed, and much redder in colour than the hills near it.

On nearing the mountains many small villages appear. Yazih village has a solid stone wall round it. Wheat is cultivated by the natives, good water being obtainable here in small but limpid streams. Then we have the old village of Lhas, now rejoicing in the new name of Mazemullahmat, and near it, Fezahbad, where I halted.

I strolled in the afternoon a mile from the latter village to the pass, 8,000 feet above sea level. Directly in front of the pass (at 110° bearings magnetic) stands a high peak, and

beyond it to the right of the observer (at 140° b.m.) another and higher summit.

We leave behind to the W.N.W. the high Sara mountain range, no peaks of which, I estimated, rose above 10,000 feet. W.N.W. (at 280° b.m.) is a most curious conical hill, standing isolated and very high above the plain.

Among the most common sights of these parts are the whirlwinds—the *tourbillons*,—each revolving with terrific rapidity round its own axis and raising to the sky a cylindrical column of dust. They further move along the country in a spasmodic manner, but never so fast that they cannot be avoided. The diameter of the wind columns I observed by the dust carried with it, varied from 3 feet to 20 feet.

The mountains we are travelling on are said to be somewhat unsafe, the villagers being given to attacking caravans, and robber bands coming here for shelter when it becomes unsafe for them to be on the Kashan-Yezd high road. In fact, while resting in the house of Haji-Mulla Ahmed at Fezahbad, a curious lot of men appeared, who, notwithstanding the remonstrances of Sadek and Haji, broke into the house in a most boisterous manner, demanding food of the landlord. They were armed with revolvers and old Martini rifles, and had plenty of cartridges about their persons. They seemed quite taken aback to find a European inside the room. They changed their attitude at once, and became quite polite.

I entertained them to tea, of which they drank gallons. I cannot say that I was

particularly charmed with their faces, but their manner was certainly most courteous. They showed me their rifles—English Martinis with additional gold ornamentations of lion and sun, such as one sees in thousands all over Persia. I asked them where they got them from. They said they came from the Persian Gulf.

Haji Mulla Ahmed, the founder of the village, was a fine old fellow with a kindly face, eyes shining like beads under an overhanging brow, and a crimson beard dyed with henna. He appeared rather sulky at this unwonted visit, and more sulky still later when the visitors left me and he had to provide food for them. He said that the robbers frequently called upon him, and were a great drain on his supplies.

When we left at 1.45 a.m. to go across the pass, he advised Sadek and myself to load our rifles and keep a sharp look-out. As I had already measured the altitude of the pass in the afternoon I had no particular object in keeping awake, so I slung the rifle to my saddle and dozed off on my mule as we were slowly winding our way up to the summit. The long night marches were so dreary and the sound of the mules' bells so monotonous that it was most difficult to keep awake. One gradually learns to balance one's self quite well on the saddle while asleep, and it does shorten the long hours of the night very considerably. Occasionally one wakes up abruptly with a jolt, and one fancies that one is just about to tumble over, but although I suppose I must have ridden in my life hundreds

of miles while asleep on the saddle, I have never once had a fall in the natural course of affairs. The animals, too, are generally so intelligent that they do for one the balancing required and manage to keep under the rider.

On that particular night I was extremely sleepy. I opened my eyes for a second when we reached the pass and began to descend on the other side, but sleepiness overcame me again. I was riding the first mule in the caravan. Unexpectedly I received a fearful blow in the face, and I was very nearly torn off the saddle. There was a curious metallic buzzing resounding in the air, and before I had time to warn those that came after, Sadek, who came next, was knocked down, and the mules, frightened at this unusual occurrence, stampeded down the steep incline. It was the telegraph wire hanging loose right across the road that had caused the accident. The road was in zig-zag, and was crossed several times by the wire which was laid more or less in a straight line. But this, of course, I did not know, so a few minutes later, before we had time to bring the runaway mules to a stop, the wire, unseen, was again met with a foot or so above the ground. It caught the mules on the legs, and as they were tied to one another, and were carried on by the impetus of the pace at which we were going, all the animals tumbled down one on the top of the other in a heap. The packs got mercilessly undone, and it took us the best part of an hour to disentangle all and get things straight again.

The cold was bitter. Some two miles East of the pass there were two roads, one leading to Nain, the other to Nao Gombes. We took the latter and shorter route, and with some sense of relief now we left the telegraph line, which proceeds to Nain.

On the plateau east of the pass, we found six small villages, the most eastern—Eshratawat (Ishratabad)—being the largest (Altitude 6,800 ft.). When the sun was about to rise we more clearly distinguished a grey, sombre, mountainous mass to the east, sharply indented at its summit, like the teeth of a gigantic saw, and ending abruptly on the northern terminus.

We had come between mountains, and some twelve miles from Fezahbad we reached Kudarz (Altitude 6,580 ft.), a village situated at the foot of the range we had crossed. As the sun peeped above the mountains close by to the east a large plain disclosed itself before the observer. A long mountain range, bluish and indistinct, could just be perceived in the distance, bounding the plain to the north. Some low, semi-spherical and a few conical hills, and also a somewhat higher and rugged rocky elevation, were found on entering the plain from the west.

Oskholun village lies in the plain 16 miles from Fezahbad. At the foot of the mountains on one's right one notices a curious deposit of sand and gravel, cushion shaped, rising in a gentle incline up the mountain side to a height of 150 feet. It would be interesting to find out exactly how these accumulations have formed,

and whether the wind or water or both are responsible for them.

On arriving at Bambis (Altitude 5,660 ft.) Sadek was in a great state of mind to find a suitable house where we could put up, as there were no caravanserais. Several of the principal people in the town offered me their own houses, and eventually, after careful inspection, I accepted the cleanest.

Of course, in small, out-of-the-way villages no great luxury could be expected even in dwellings of well-to-do people, but after entering by a miserable door and going through a filthy passage, one came to a nice little court with an ornamental tank of somewhat fetid water. Swarms of mosquitoes rose from the floating leaves of the water plants as soon as we appeared and gave us a very warm reception. In a few seconds we were stung all over.

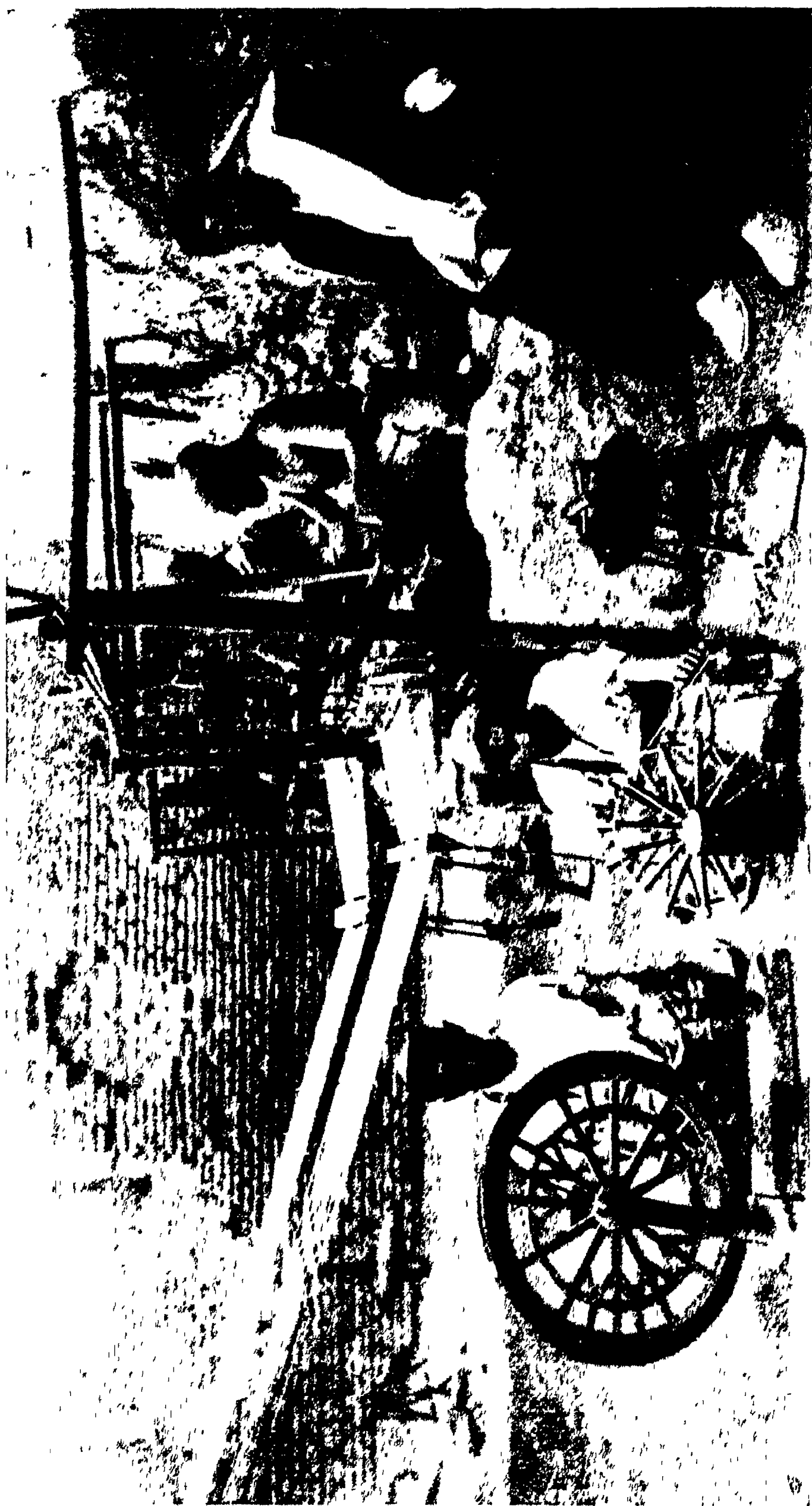
The women folks were made to stampede to the upper storey on our arrival, where they remained concealed while we stayed in the house, and the younger male members of the family hastily removed all the bedding and personal belongings from the principal room, which I was to occupy. Clouds of dust were raised when an attempt was made to sweep the dried mud floor. Out of the windows of the upper storey the women flung handsome carpets, which Sadek duly spread upon the floor.

The room was a very nice one, plastered all over and painted white, enriched with adhering dried leaves of red roses forming a design upon

the ceiling. There were nine receptacles in the walls, and four more in the sides of the chimney piece. Next to this room was another similar one, and opposite in the courtyard a kind of alcove was used as a kitchen. It had a raised part of mud bricks some three feet high and about as broad, on which was fixed the weaving loom that stretched right across the court when in use. A hole was made in the raised portion, in which the weaver sat when at work, so as to keep the legs under the loom.

The loom is simple enough, the two sets of long horizontal threads being kept at high tension by an iron bar fixed into the cylindrical wooden rollers, round which the threads are rolled. There is then a vertical arrangement for moving the long horizontal sets of threads alternately up and down by means of pedals, a cross thread being passed between them with a spool, and beaten home each time with the large comb suspended in a vertical position. The threads are kept in position by two additional combs which represent the width of the cloth, and in which each horizontal thread is kept firm in its central position by a clever device of inverted loops between which it is passed and clenched tight. The cloth is rolled round a wooden cylinder. It is extremely strong and durable. Almost each house has a weaving loom.

On one side of the court was a recess in the wall for valuables. The padlock was closed by means of a screw. By the side of the kitchen one found the lumber and refuse room, and there



PERSIAN SPINNING WHEELS AND WEAVING LOOMS.

were corresponding arrangements on the floor above. Unlike other Persian houses this was lighted by windows with neat woodwork, instead of by the usual skylight hole in the dome of the room.

The natives at this village were very handsome. There was a touch of the Afghan type in the men, and the women had fine faces with magnificent eyes. One found firm mouths with well-cut and properly developed lips, in contrast to the weak, drooping mouths of the people one had met in the western cities ; and the noses were finely chiselled, with well-defined nostrils. There was no unsteadiness in the eyes, so common to the Persians of the north-west,—and these fellows consequently presented quite an honest appearance, while the overhanging brow added a look of pensiveness. The skull was peculiarly formed, slanting upwards considerably from the forehead to an abnormal height, and giving the cranium an elongated shape. The ears, too, generally malformed or under-developed in most Persians, were better shaped in these people, although by no means perfect. They, nevertheless, showed a certain refinement of blood and race.

In the matter of men's clothing it was gratifying to find the ugly pleated frockcoats discarded—or, rather, never adopted—and long picturesque shirts and ample trousers worn instead, held together by a kamarband. Over all was thrown a brown burnous, not unlike that of the Bedouins, and the head was wound in an ample turban of the Hindoo pattern.

Children wore short coats ornamented with embroidery and shells at the back and pretty silver buttons in front. Their little caps, too, were embellished with shells, beads, or gold braiding.

Nearly all male natives, old and young, suffered from complaints of the eyes, but not so the women,—probably because they spent most of the time in the house and did not expose themselves to the glare of the sun and salty dust, which seemed to be the principal cause of severe inflammation of the eyes.

Bambis village was greatly dependent upon Isfahan for its provisions, and therefore everything was very dear. Excellent vegetables, *shalga*, *sardek*, *churconda*, and pomegranates were nevertheless grown, by means of a most elaborate and ingenious way of irrigation, but the water was very brackish and dirty. Felt filters were occasionally used by the natives for purifying the drinking water.

There were a number of Sayids living at Bambis, who looked picturesque in their handsome green turbans; they were men of a splendid physique, very virile, simple in manner, serious and dignified, and were held in much respect by their fellow villagers.

CHAPTER XXXVII

Bambis—The Kashan-Yezd high road—The Kevir plain—Minerals—Chanoh—Sand deposits—Sherawat—Kanats—Agdah—Stone cairns—Kiafteh—An isolated mount—A long sand bar—A forsaken village—Picturesque Biddeh—Handsome caravanserai at Meiboh—Rare baths—Shamsi—Sand-hills—Hodjatabad—Fuel—A “tower of silence”—A split camel—Thousands of borings for water—A four-towered well.

WE left Bambis at ten o'clock on Sunday evening and travelled on a flat plain the whole night. One village (Arakan) was passed, and eventually we entered the Teheran-Kashan-Yezd high road which we struck at Nao Gombes. Here there were a Chappar Khana and an ancient Caravanserai—the latter said to be of the time of Shah Abbas—but we did not stop, and continued our journey along a broad, immense stretch of flat country consisting of sand and gravel.

My men were fast asleep on their mules, but the animals seemed to know their way well, as they had been on this road many times before. The night was extremely cold. We were now at an altitude of 4,240 feet in what is called the “Kevir,” a small salt desert plain, enclosed to the south-west of the track by the south-easterly

continuation of the Sara and Keble range ; to the north-east by the Mehradji, Turkemani, and Duldul mountains ; and to the north by the Aparek and Abiane mountains.

During the rainy weather the drainage of the latter two ranges is carried in large volumes into the plain between them, and eventually into the Kevir, in which it loses itself. To the south-east the Ardakan mountains form a barrier, having, however, a gap between them and the Andjile mountains, through which the road crosses in a south-easterly direction.

Antimony is found in the Mehradji mountains, and copper, lead (in several localities), nickel and antimony in the Anarek region. Silver is said to have been found in the Andjile. To the north-east, almost in the middle of the Kevir, stands the isolated high mountain of Siakuh.

Thirty-six miles from Bambis we reached Chanoh, a most desolate place, with a rest-house in ruins and a couple of suspicious-looking wells. We arrived here at eight in the morning, after having travelled since ten o'clock the previous evening, but we only allowed ourselves and our mules four hours' rest for breakfast, and we were again in the saddle at noon.

There is nothing to interest the traveller on this part of the road except an occasional passing caravan, and the scenery is dreary beyond words. Long, long stretches of flat, uninteresting sand and gravel, or sand alone in places. On nearing the spot where the track passes between the Andjile and Ardakan mountains we find sand

deposits stretching out for nearly two miles from the mountain ranges to the south-west and south.

Shehrawat (Shehrabad) village differs from most we have seen in the shape of its few roofs, which are semi-cylindrical, like a vault, and not semi-spherical. A mud tower rises above them, and there are a few fields and some fruit-trees near the habitations.

About a mile further, more sand dunes are to be found, and a long row of kanats carrying water to the village of Nasirabad, half a mile east of the track. Further on we come upon an open canal, and we can perceive a village about two miles distant, also to the east of the track.

Just before arriving at Agdah the earth has positively been disembowelled in search of water, so numerous are the kanats of all sizes and depths among which we wind our way. The large village of Agdah itself stands on a prominence (4,080 ft.) against a background of mountains, and is embellished with a great many orchards tidily walled round. It is a famous place for pomegranates, which are really delicious. As usual a number of ruined houses surround those still standing, and as we skirt the village wall over 30 feet high we observe some picturesque high round towers.

The telegraph wire (which we had met again at Nao Gombes) was here quite an amusing sight. In the neighbourhood of the village it was highly decorated with rags of all colours, and with stones tied to long strings which, when

thrown up, wind themselves round and remain entangled in the wire.

There were some 300 habitations in Agdah, the principal one with a large quadrangular tower, being that of the Governor ; but both the Chappar khana and the caravanserai were the filthiest we had so far encountered. A number of Sayids lived here.

We halted at four in the afternoon on Monday, October 19th. The mules were so tired that I decided to give them twelve hours' rest. It may be noticed that we had travelled from ten o'clock the previous evening until four in the afternoon—eighteen hours—with only four hours' rest,—quite good going for caravan marching. The mules were excellent.

At 4 A.M. on the Tuesday we rode out of the caravanserai, and still travelled south-east on a flat gravel plain, with the high Ardakan Mountains to the east. Fourteen miles or so from Agdah the country became undulating with large pebble stones washed down from the mountain-sides. Cairns of stone had been erected on the first hillock we came to near the road. We passed two villages, one on the track, the other about a mile north of it, and near this latter two or three smaller hamlets were situated.

Sixteen miles from Agdah we halted for an hour or so at the village of Kiafteh (Chaftah)—altitude 3,960 feet—with its round tower and the Mosque of Semur-ed-din one mile north of it. Here there was a Chappar khana. The labourers wore a short blue shirt and ample

trousers, with white turban and white shoes. Having partaken of a hearty breakfast we were off again on the road in the broiling sun at 10.30 A.M. Beautiful effects of mirage were before us like splendid lakes, with the mountains reflected into them, and little islands.

As we go through the gap in the mountains that are now to the south-west and north-east of us the plain narrows to a width of some four miles, and the direction of the track is east-south-east. To the south-east the hillocks of a low range stretch as far as the mountains on the south-west, and several parallel ranges lie on the north-east. South, very far off, is the high Shirkuh mountain.

Eight miles from Kiafteh we cross over the low hill range by a pass (4,090 ft.) about 100 feet above the plain (3,990 ft.). There is a mournful look about the soil of black sand, and also about the gloomy shingle hill range extending from the north-east to the south-west. The black underlying rock where exposed to the air shows numberless holes corroded in it, as by the action of moving salt water. An inexplicable isolated hill stands in the centre of the valley, which here is not perfectly flat, but in a gentle incline, higher at its south-western extremity than at its north-eastern edge.

A formation of mud dunes similar to those we had encountered near Saigsi is here to be noticed, this time, however, not directly in front of each gap in the mountain range, but opposite them near the range in front, that forms a kind of

bay. These dunes were probably caused by the deposit of sand and gravel left by a current that met the barrier of mountains on the opposite side of the bay.

On crossing the hill range some eighteen miles from Kiafteh, we come across a sand-bar which stretches in a semi-circle half way across the valley, where it then suddenly turns south-east. It is about 80 feet high. To all appearance the sand deposited upon this bar seems to have travelled in a direction from north north-east to south south-west. A mile further it meets another sand dune, stretching in a general direction of south-west to north-east. Where the higher dune comes to an end half-way across the valley we find a village, having the usual quadrangular mud enclosure with towers, an abandoned caravanserai fast tumbling down, and a few domed mud hovels. The larger and better preserved village of Bafro, one mile to the east of the track, is well surrounded by a long expanse of verdant trees. South of it is the other flourishing settlement of Deawat (Deabad).

The abandoned village of Assiabo Gordoneh, now in ruins, tells us a sad story. The village at one time evidently ran short of water. Hundreds of borings can be seen all round it in all directions, but they must have been of no avail. The place had to be forsaken.

The sand dune is here 80 feet high. The space between these two sand dunes—plateau-like—is nicely cultivated in patches where some water has been found.

We arrived in the evening at Biddeh, a very large and most weird place, with habitations partly cut into the high mud banks. The houses were several storeys high. The greater number of buildings, now in ruins, show evidence of the former importance of this place and the wonderful ancient aqueducts with the water carried over a high bridge from one side of a ravine to the other are of great interest. This must have been a prosperous place at one time. The whitish clay soil has been quaintly corroded by the action of water, and one finds curious grottoes and deep, contorted, natural channels. A mosque and several impressive buildings—the adjective only applies when you do not get too near them—stand high up against the cliff side. The whole place is quite picturesque.

The mules go along a narrow lane between walled fields, and then by a steepish ascent among ruined houses and patches of cultivation we reach the summit of the clay dune, on which the newer village of Meiboh (Maibut)—3,940 feet—is situated.

There is a most beautiful (for Persia) caravanserai here with a delightful domed tank of clear spring water, in which I then and there took a delicious bath, much to the horror of the caravanserai proprietor who assured me—when it was too late—that the tank was no *hammam* or bath, but was water for drinking purposes. His horror turned into white rage when, moreover, he declared that my soap, which I had used freely, would kill all the fish which he had

carefully nursed for years in the tank. We spent most of the evening in watching the state of their health, and eventually it was with some relief that we perceived all the soap float away and the water again become as clear as crystal. To the evident discomfiture of the caravanserai man, when we paid the last visit to the tank at 4 A.M. just previous to my departure, no deaths were to be registered in the tank, and therefore no heavy damages to pay.

There is nothing one misses more than baths while travelling in central and eastern Persia. There is generally hardly sufficient water to drink at the various stages, and it is usually so slimy and bad that, although one does not mind drinking it, because one has to, one really would not dream of bathing or washing in it! Hence my anxiety not to lose my chance of a good plunge at Meiboh.

On leaving Meiboh at 4 A.M. we passed for a considerable distance through land under cultivation, the crop being principally wheat. A large flour-mill was in course of construction at Meiboh. After that we were again travelling on a sandy plain, with thousands of borings for water on all sides, and were advancing mainly to the south-west towards the mountains. We continued thus for some twelve miles as far as Shamsi, another large village with much cultivation around it. After that, there were sand and stones under our mules' hoofs, and a broiling sun over our heads. On both sides the track was

screened by mountains and by a low hill range to the north-east.

About eight miles from Shamsi we entered a region of sand hills, the sand accumulations—at least, judging by the formation of the hills—showing the movement of the sand to have been from west to east. This fact was rather curious and contrasted with nearly all the other sand accumulations which we found later in eastern Persia, where the sand moved mostly in a south-westerly direction. No doubt the direction of the wind was here greatly influenced and made to deviate by the barriers of mountains so close at hand.

There were numerous villages, large and small, on both sides of the track. Hodjatabad, our last halt before reaching Yezd, only sixteen miles further, had a handsome caravanserai, the porch of which was vaulted over the high road. It was comparatively clean, and had spacious stabling for animals. Delicious grapes were to be obtained here, and much of the country had been cleared of the sand deposit and its fertile soil cultivated.

Fuel was very expensive in Persia. At the entrance of nearly every caravanserai was displayed a large clumsy wooden scale, upon which wood was weighed for sale to travellers, and also, of course, barley and fodder for one's animals. The weights were generally round stones of various sizes.

Jaffarabad, a very large and prosperous place, stood about one mile to the north-west of the

caravanserai, and had vegetation and many trees near it; this was also the case with the other village of Medjamed, which had innumerable fields round it.

Firuzabad came next, as we proceeded towards Yezd, and then, after progressing very slowly,—we sank deep in sand for several miles—we perceived upon a rugged hill a large round white “tower of silence,” which had been erected there by the Guebres or (Parsees) for the disposal of their dead. We skirted the mud wall of Elawad—where the women’s dress was in shape not unlike that of Turkish women, and consisted of ample, highly-coloured trousers and short zouave jacket. The men resembled Afghans.

I here came across the first running camel I had seen in Persia, and on it was mounted a picturesque rider, who had slung to his saddle a sword, a gun, and two pistols, while round his waistband a dagger, a powder-flask, bullet pouch, cap carrier, and various such other warlike implements hung gracefully in the bright light of the sun. A few yards further we came upon a ghastly sight—a split camel. The poor obstinate beast had refused to cross a narrow stream by the bridge, and had got instead on the slippery mud near the water edge. His long clumsy hind-legs had slipped with a sudden *écart* that had torn his body ripped open. The camel was being killed as we passed, and its piercing cries and moans were too pitiful for words.

The mountain on which the huge tower of silence has been erected—by permission of Zil-

es-Sultan, I was told—is quadrangular with a long, narrow, flat-topped platform on the summit. The best view of it is obtained from the south. Sadek told me in all seriousness from information received from the natives, that the bodies are placed in these towers in a sitting position with a stick under the chin to support them erect. When crows come in swarms to pick away at the body, if the right eye is plucked out first by a plundering bird, it is said to be a sure sign that the ex-soul of the body will go to heaven. If the left eye is picked at first, then a warmer climate is in store for the soul of the dead.

After leaving behind the Guebre tower we come again upon thousands of borings for water, and ancient *kanats*, now dry and unused. The country grows less sandy about eight miles from Yezd, and we have now gradually ascended some 320 feet from the village of Meiboh (Maibut) to an altitude of 4,230 feet. Here we altogether miss the flourishing cultivation which lined the track as far as the Guebre tower, and cannot detect a single blade of grass or natural vegetation of any kind on any side. There are high mountains to the south-west and east.

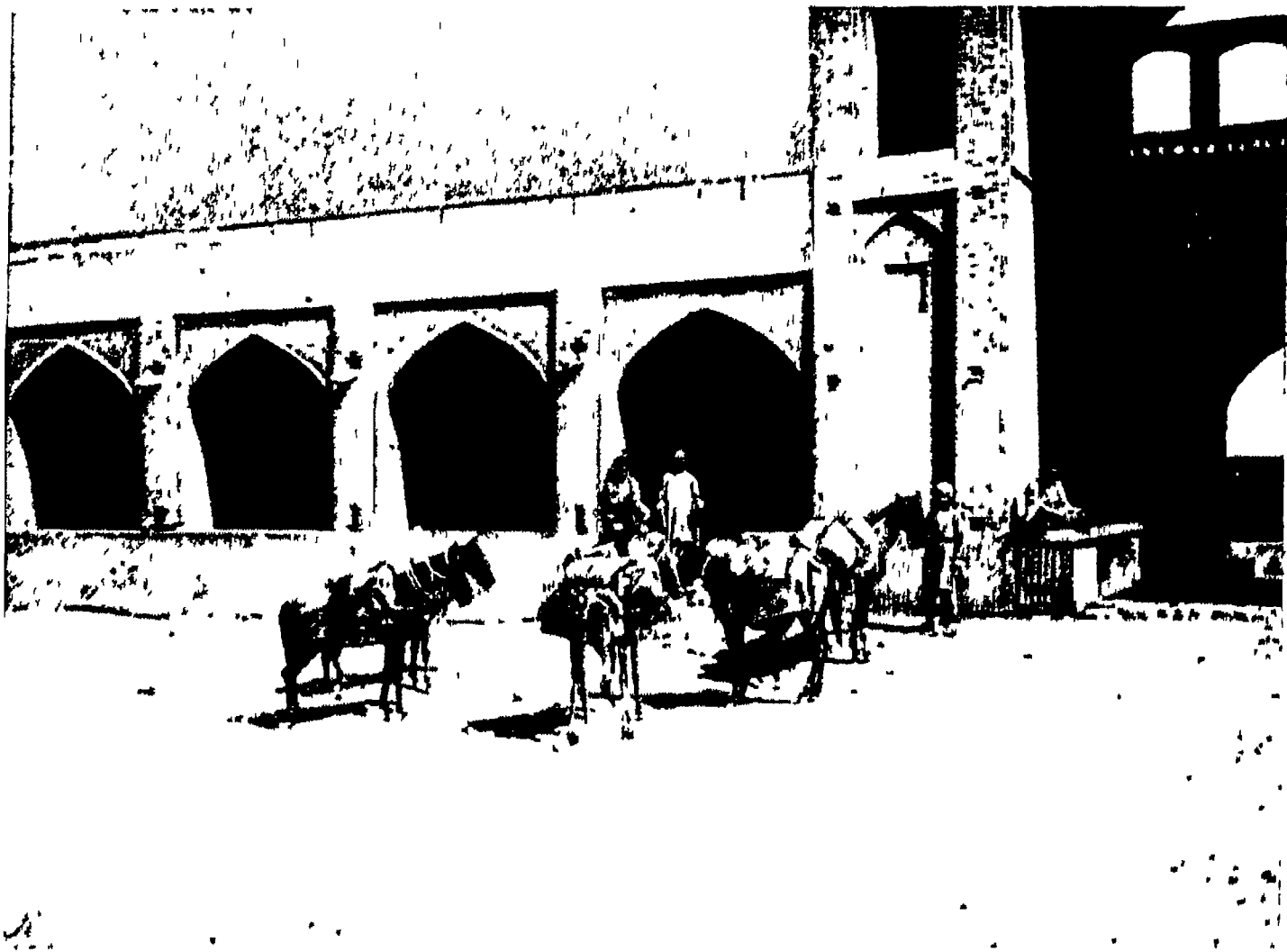
On the right (west) side of the track, eight miles from Yezd, is the neat mud wall of Nusseratabad, with a few trees peeping above it, but to the left of us all is barren, and we toddled along on grey, clayish sand.

Half-way between Nusseratabad and Yezd a four-towered well is to be found, and a quarter of a mile further the Mazereh Sadrih village,

one and a-half farsakhs from Yezd. The mules sank deep in the fine sand. There were a good many Guebres about, mostly employed in carrying manure on donkeys. One of them, who was just returning from one of these errands, addressed me, much to my surprise, in Hindustani, which he spoke quite fluently. He told me that he had travelled all over India, and was about to start again for Bombay.

Some "*badjir*"—high ventilating shafts—and a minaret or two tell us that we are approaching the town of Yezd—the ancient city of the Parsees—and soon after we enter the large suburb of Mardavoh, with its dome and graceful tower.

A track in an almost direct line, and shorter than the one I had followed, exists between Isfahan and Yezd. It passes south of the Gao Khanah (Salt Lake) to the south-east of Isfahan.



HALTING AT A CARAVANSERAI



A STREET IN YAZD, SHOWING HIGH *Badgir* OR VENTILATING SHAFTS

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Yezd — Water supply — Climate — Cultivation — Products—
Exports and imports—Population—Trade—Officials—
Education—Persian children—Public schools—The Mushir
school—The Parsee school—C.M.S. mission school—The
medical mission—The hospital—Christianizing difficult—
European ladies in Persia—Tolerance of race religions.

YEZD is the most central city of Persia, but from a pictorial point of view the least interesting city in the Shah's empire. There are a great many mosques—it is said about fifty—but none very beautiful. The streets are narrow and tortuous, with high walls on either side and nothing particularly attractive about them. Curious narrow arches are frequently to be noticed overhead in the streets, and it is supposed that they are to support the side walls against collapse.

There is not, at least I could not find, a single building of note in the city except the principal and very ancient mosque,—a building in the last degree of decay, but which must have formerly been adorned with a handsome frontage. There is a very extensive but tumbling-down wall around the city, and a wide moat, reminding one of a once strongly fortified place.

To-day the greater portion of Yezd is in ruins. The water supply is unfortunately very defective and irregular. There are no perennial streams of any importance, and all the irrigation works are dependent on artificial subterranean canals and kanats, and these in their turn are mostly subject to the rain and snow fall on the hills surrounding Yezd. Unluckily, the rains are now neither frequent nor abundant, and the land has in consequence been suffering severely from want of water. Snow falls in winter and to a great extent feeds the whole water supply of Yezd and its neighbourhood. It is not surprising, therefore, that more than three-quarters of the province of Yezd is barren land, cultivation being under the circumstances absolutely out of the question. Some portions of the province, however, where water is obtainable are quite fertile.

Towards the west the hills show some signs of vegetation, mainly fruit trees. But nothing larger than a bush grows wild, if we except occasional stunted fig-trees. Surrounded by mountains as Yezd is, there are two different climates close at hand : that of the "Kohestan" or hills, temperate in summer but piercing cold in winter, and the other, much warmer, of the low-lying land. In the eastern lowlands the summer heat is excessive, in autumn just bearable, and in the spring the climate is quite delightful. In all seasons, however, with few exceptions, it is generally dry and always healthy and pure.

Where some moisture is obtainable the soil is

very fertile and is cultivated by the natives. The chief cultivated products are wheat, barley, and other cereals, cotton, opium, and tobacco. The vine flourishes near Yezd, and the wines used by the Parsees are not unpalatable. Mulberries are cultivated in large quantities. Silk is probably the most important product of the Yezd district. Wild game is said to be plentiful on the mountains. With the exception of salt, the mineral products of the district are insignificant.

Yezd is a great trading centre, partly owing to its geographical position, partly because its inhabitants are very go-ahead and enterprising. Yezd men are great travellers and possess good business heads. They go across the salt desert to Khorassan and Afghanistan, and they trade, with India principally, via Kerman, Bandar Abbas, and Lingah, and also to a small extent via Sistan. Previously the trade went entirely by Shiraz and Bushire, but now that road is very unsafe, owing to robbers. Yezd traders travel even much further afield, as far as China, India, Java. During my short stay I met quite a number of people who had visited Bombay, Calcutta, Russia, Bokhara, and Turkestan.

The settled population of Yezd consists mostly of Shia Mahommedans, the descendants of the ancient Persian race, with an intermixture of foreign blood; the Parsees or Zoroastrians, who still retain their purity of race and religious faith, and who are principally engaged in agriculture and commerce; a very small community of European Christians, including a few Armenian

natives of Julfa (Isfahan). Then there are about one thousand Jews, who live mostly in abject poverty.

The Mahommedan population of the town may be approximately estimated at sixty thousand. Here, even more noticeably than in any other Persian town, there is very little outward show in the buildings, which are of earth and mud and appear contemptible, but the interiors of houses of the rich are pleasant and well-cared for. The miserable look of the town, however, is greatly redeemed by the beauty of the gardens which surround it.

It is to be regretted that the roads in and around Yezd are in a wretched condition, being absolutely neglected, for were there safer and more practicable roads trade would be facilitated and encouraged to no mean degree. As things stand now, indigenous trade is increasing slowly, but foreign trade is making no headway. The silk and opium trades, which were formerly the most profitable, have of late declined. Cottons and woollens, silk, the *Kasb* and *Alubi* of very finest quality, shawls, cotton carpets and noted felts equal if not superior to the best of Kum, are manufactured both for home use and for export.

The exports mainly consist of almonds and nuts, tobacco, opium (to China), colouring matters, walnut-wood, silk, wool, cotton carpets, felts, skins, assafoetida, shoes, copper pots, country loaf-sugar, sweetmeats, for which Yezd is celebrated, etc. Henna is brought to Yezd

from Minab and Bandar Abbas to be ground and prepared for the Persian market, being used with *rang* as a dye for the hair.

The chief imports are spices, cotton goods, yarn, prints, copper sheeting, tin slabs, Indian tea, broadcloth, jewellery, arms, cutlery, watches, earthenware, glass and enamel wares, iron, loaf-sugar, powdered sugar, etc.

The Government of Yezd, as of other cities of Persia, is purely despotic, limited only by the power and influence of the Mahommedan priests, the Mullahs, and by the dread of private vengeance or an occasional insurrection. It is true that the actions of Hakims and Governors and their deputies are liable to revision from the Teheran authorities, but this does not prevent exactions and extortions being carried on quite openly and on a large scale.

The present Governor, Salal-ud-dauleh—"Glory of the state,"—eldest son of Zil-es-Sultan, is an intelligent and well-to-do young man, sensibly educated, who tries his best to be fair to everybody; but it is very difficult for him to run alone against the strong tide of corruption which swamps everything in Persia. He is not in good health, and spends much of his time hunting wild game at his country place in the hills near Yezd. His town residence is a kind of citadel—not particularly impressive, nor clean—inside the city wall. The Naib-ul-Kukumat was the Deputy-Governor at the time of my visit. He seemed quite an affable and intelligent man.

Near the Palace in the heart of the city are the covered bazaars, old and new, and well stocked with goods, but they are in character so exactly like those of Teheran and Isfahan, already described in previous chapters, that a repetition is quite unnecessary. The streets are irregularly planned, and the older ones are very dark and dingy, but the newer arcades are lofty and handsome. The merchants seem—for Persia—quite active and business-like.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the population of Yezd is said to have been one hundred thousand souls, and to have dwindled down to less than thirty thousand in 1868–1870 during the terrific famine which took place at that time. Whether this is correct or not, it is difficult to ascertain, but to-day the city is on the increase again, and the population, as already stated, is certainly not less than sixty thousand. There are numerous Mahommedan *hammams* (baths)—some 65 or more—in Yezd, but Europeans are not allowed to enter them.

The Yezd people are very forward in educational matters. I inspected some of the schools and colleges, and was much impressed by the matter-of-fact, sensible way in which some of the more modern institutions were conducted. They would indeed put to shame a great many of our schools in England, and as for the talent of children, as compared with English children of the same age, one had better say nothing at all. With no exaggeration, children aged six analysed and reasoned out problems placed before

them in a way that would in this country baffle men of six times that age. The quickness of the Persian child's brain is well-nigh astounding, and as for their goodness and diligence, there is only one word that fits them: they are simply "angelic." Their intense reverence for the teachers, their eagerness really to learn, and their quiet, attentive behaviour were indeed worthy of admiration. But it must be well understood that these angelic traits are confined to the school-days only. When they leave school the "angelic" wears off very soon, and the boys, unluckily, drift into the old and demoralized ways with which Persia is reeking.

There are about a dozen public schools in Yezd, but the one conducted on most modern lines is the new school started by the Mushir. If I understood aright, the Mushir provided the buildings and money to work the school for a period of time, after which if successful it will be handed over to be supported by the city or by private enterprise.

The school was excellent. There were a hundred pupils from the ages of six to fifteen, and they were taught Arabic, Persian, English, French, geography, arithmetic, &c. There was a Mudir or head master who spoke French quite fluently, and separate teachers for the other various matters. The school was admirably conducted, with quite a military discipline mingled with extreme kindness and thoughtfulness on the part of the teachers towards the pupils. By the sound of a bell the boys were collected by the

Mudir in the court-yard, round which on two floors were the schoolrooms, specklessly clean and well-aired.

While I was being entertained to tea, sherbet, and coffee, on a high platform, I was politely requested to ascertain for myself the knowledge of the boys—most of whom had only been in the school less than a year. It was rather interesting to hear little chaps of six or eight rattle off, in a language foreign to them and without making a single mistake, all the capitals of the principal countries in the world, and the largest rivers, the highest mountains, the biggest oceans, and so on. And other little chaps—no taller than three feet—summed up and subtracted and divided and multiplied figures with an assurance, quickness and accuracy which I, personally, very much envied. Then they wrote English and French sentences on the slate, and Persian and Arabic, and I came out of the school fully convinced that whatever was taught in that school was certainly taught well. These were not special pupils, but any pupil I chose to pick out from the lot.

I visited another excellent institution, the Parsee school—one of several teaching institutions that have been established in Yezd by the Bombay Society for the amelioration of Persian Zoroastrians,—in a most beautiful building internally, with large courts and a lofty vaulted hall wherein the classes are held. The boys, from the ages of six to fifteen, lined the walls, sitting cross-legged on mats, their notebooks,

inkstands, and slate by their side. At the time of my visit there were as many as 230 pupils, and they received a similar education, but not quite so high, as in the Mushir school. In the Parsee school less time was devoted to foreign languages.

Ustad Javan Mard, a most venerable old man, was the head-master, and Ustad Baharam his assistant. The school seemed most flourishing, and the pupils very well-behaved. Although the stocks for punishing bad children were very prominent under the teacher's table, the head-master assured me that they were seldom required.

Another little but most interesting school is the one in connection with the clerical work done by the Rev. Napier Malcolm. It is attended principally by the sons of well-to-do Mussulmans and by a few Parsees, who take this excellent opportunity of learning English thoroughly. Most of the teaching is done by an Armenian assistant trained at the C. M. S. of Julfa. Here, too, I was delightfully surprised to notice how intelligent the boys were, and Mr. Malcolm himself spoke in high terms of the work done by the students. They showed a great facility for learning languages, and I was shown a boy who, in a few months, had picked up sufficient English to converse quite fluently. The boys, I was glad to see, are taught in a very sensible manner, and what they are made to learn will be of permanent use to them.

The Church Missionary Society is to be thanked, not only for this good educational work which it supplies in Yezd to children of all creeds, but for the well-appointed hospital for men and women. A large and handsome caravanserai was presented to the Medical Mission by Mr. Godarz Mihriban-i-Irani, one of the leading Parsees of Yezd, and the building was adapted and converted by the Church Missionary Society into a hospital, with a permanent staff in the men's hospital of an English doctor and three Armenian assistants. There is also a smaller women's hospital with an English lady doctor, who in 1901 was aided by two ladies and by an Armenian assistant trained at Julfa.

There are properly disinfected wards in both these hospitals, with good beds, a well appointed dispensary, and dissecting room.

The natives have of late availed themselves considerably of the opportunity to get good medical assistance, but few except the very poorest, it seems, care actually to remain in the hospital wards. They prefer to take the medicine and go to their respective houses. A special dark room has been constructed for the operation and cure of cataract, which is a common complaint in Yezd.

The health of Yezd is uncommonly good, and were it not that the people ruin their digestive organs by excessive and injudicious eating, the ailments of Yezd would be very few. The population is, without exception, most favourable to the work of the Medical Mission, and all

classes seem to be grateful for the institution in the town.

The school work of the Mission necessarily appeals to a much smaller circle, but there is no doubt whatever about its being appreciated, and, further, there seems to be exceedingly little hostility to such religious inquiry and teaching as does not altogether collide with or appear to tend to severance from the Mussulman or Parsee communities. This is very likely due to the fast extending influence of the Behai sect, the members of which regard favourably an acquaintance with other non-idolatrous religions. These people, notwithstanding their being outside of official protection and in collision with the Mullahs, form to-day a large proportion of the population of Yezd, and exercise an influence on public opinion considerably wider than the boundaries of their sect. As for actual Missionary work of Christianization going beyond this point, the difficulties encountered and the risks of a catastrophe are too great at present for any sensible man to attempt it.

The European staff of the C.M.S. Mission, employed entirely in educational and medical work in Yezd, consists of the Rev. Napier Malcolm, M.A., a most sensible and able man, and Mrs. Malcolm, who is of great help to her husband ; George Day Esq., L.R.C.P. & S., and Mrs. Day ; Miss Taylor, L.R.C.P. & S., Miss Stirling, Miss Brighty.

The work for ladies is somewhat uphill and not always pleasant, for in Mussulman countries

women, if not veiled, are constantly exposed to the insults of roughs ; but people are beginning to get reconciled to what appeared to them at first the very strange habits of European women, and no doubt in time it will be less unpleasant for ladies to work among the natives. So far the few English ladies who have braved the consequences of undertaking work in Persia are greatly to be admired for their pluck, patience, and tact.

The Yezd C.M.S. Mission was started in May, 1898, by Dr. Henry White, who had a year's previous experience of medical work at Julfa and Isfahan. He was then joined in December of the same year by the Rev. Napier Malcolm, who had just come out from England. The European community of Yezd is very small. Besides the above mentioned people—who do not always reside in Yezd—there are two Englishmen of the Bank of Persia, and a Swiss employed by the firm of Ziegler & Co. That is all.

The fact that the Persian Government recognizes the “race religions,” such as those of Armenians, Parsees and Jews, has led many to believe that religious liberty exists in Persia. There is a relative tolerance, but nothing more, and even the Parsees and Jews have had until quite lately—and occasionally even now have—to submit to considerable indignities on the part of the Mullahs. For new sects like the Behai, however, who abandon the Mussulman faith, there is absolutely no official protection. Great

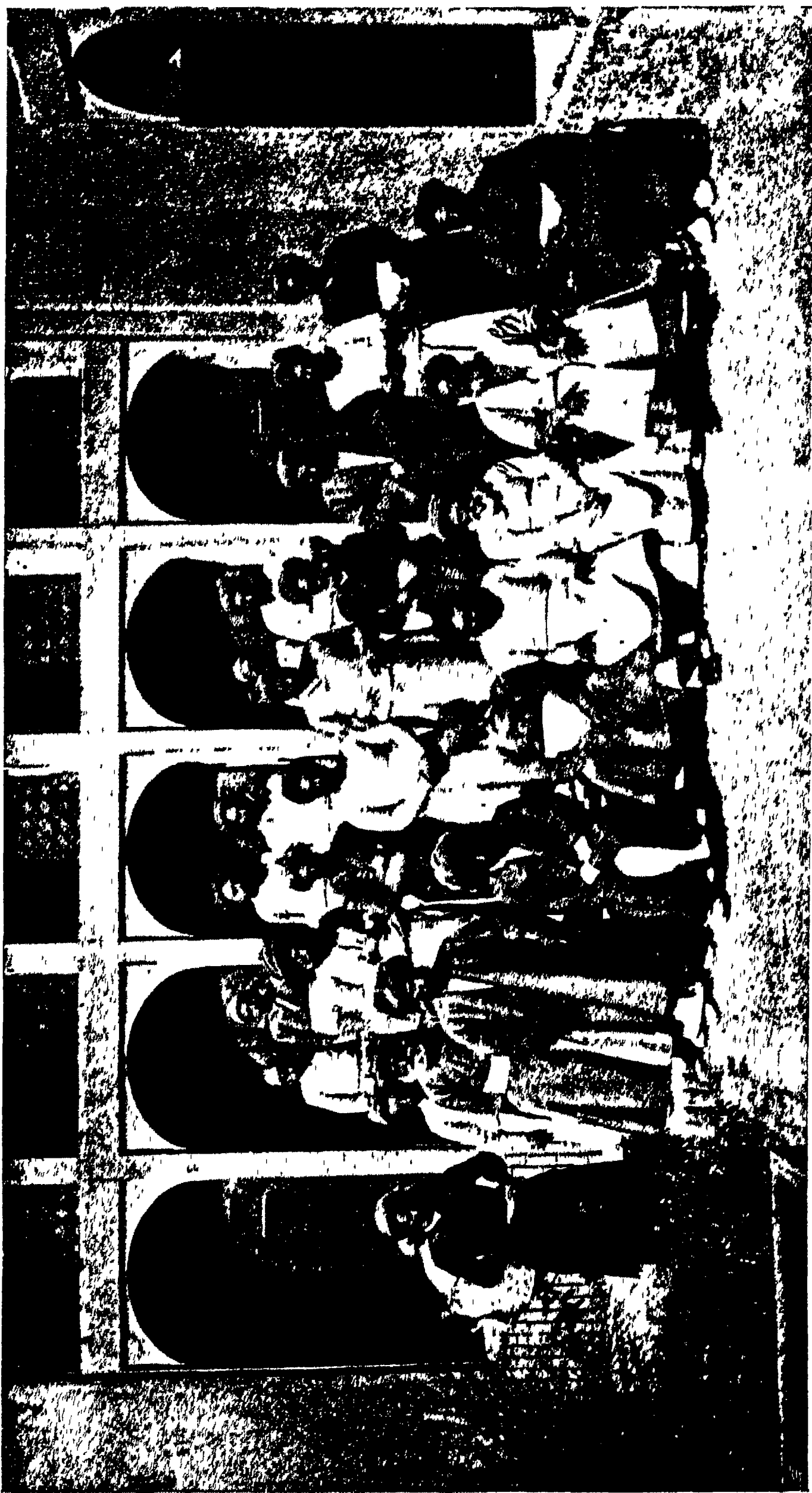
secrecy has to be maintained to avoid persecution. There seems, nevertheless, to be a disposition on the part of the Government to go considerably beyond this point of sufferance, but wider toleration does not exist at present, nor is it perfectly clear to what length the Government of the country would be prepared to go.

CHAPTER XXXIX

The Guebres of Yezd—Askizar—The Sassanian dynasty—Yezdeyard—The name “Parsees”—The Arab invasion of Persia—A romantic tale—Zoroaster—Parsees of India—Why the Parsees remained in Yezd and Kerman—Their number—Oppression—The teaching of the Zoroastrian religion and of the Mahommedan—A refreshing quality—Family ties—Injustice—Guebre places of worship—The sacred fire—Religious ceremonies—Three excellent points in the Zoroastrian religion—The Parsees not “fire worshippers”—Purification of fire—No ancient sacred books—Attire—No civil rights—The “jazia” tax—Occupations—The Bombay Parsees Amelioration Society and its work—The pioneers of trade—A national assembly—Ardeshir Meheban Irani—Establishment of the Association—Naturalized British subjects—Consulates wanted—The Bombay Parsees—Successful traders—Parsee generosity—Mr. Jamsetsji Tata.

YEZD is extremely interesting from a historical point of view, and for its close association with that wonderful race the “Guebres,” better known in Europe by the name of Parsees. The ancient city of Askizar was buried by shifting sands, in a desert with a few oases, and was followed by the present Yezd, which does not date from earlier than the time of the Sassanian dynasty.

Yezdeyard, the weak and unlucky last King of the Sassan family, which had reigned over Persia



ARDESHIR MEHEBAN IRANI AND THE LEADING MEMBERS OF THE ANGUMAN-I-NASSERI (PARSEE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY), YEZD.

for 415 years, was the first to lay the foundations of the city and to colonize its neighbourhood. It is in this city that, notwithstanding the sufferings and persecution of Mussulmans after the Arab invasion of Persia, the successors of a handful of brave people have to this day remained faithful to their native soil.

To be convinced that the Parsees of Yezd are a strikingly fine lot of people it is sufficient to look at them. The men are patriarchal, generous, sober, intelligent, thrifty ; the women, contrary to the usage of all Asiatic races, are given great freedom, but are renowned for their chastity and modesty.

The name of Parsees, adopted by the better-known Guebres who migrated to India, has been retained from Fars or Pars, their native country, which contained, before the Arab invasion, Persepolis as the capital, with a magnificent royal palace. From this province the whole kingdom eventually adopted the name.

It is not necessary to go into the history of the nine dynasties which ruled in Persia before it was conquered by the Arabs, but for our purpose it is well to remind the reader that of all these dynasties the Sassanian was the last, and Yezdeyard, as we have seen, the ultimate King of the Sassan family.

One is filled with horror at the romantic tale of how, through weakness on his part and treachery on that of his people, the fanatic Arabs, guided by the light of Allah the Prophet, conquered Persia, slaying the unbelievers and

enforcing the Mahommedan religion on the survivors. The runaway Yezdeyard was treacherously slain with his own jewelled sword by a miller, in whose house he had obtained shelter after the disastrous battle of Nahavand and his flight through Sistan, Khorassan and Merv. Persia, with every vestige of its magnificence, was lost for ever to the Persians, and the supremacy of Mahommedanism, with its demoralizing influence, its haughty intolerance and fanatic bigotry, was firmly established from one end of the country to the other. The fine temples, the shrines of the Zoroastrians, were mercilessly destroyed or changed into mosques.

Zoroaster, the prophet of the Parsees, had first promulgated his religion during the reign of Gushtasp (B.C. 1300) of the Kayanian family, but after centuries of vicissitudes and corruption it was not till the time of the Sassanian dynasty (A.D. 226) that Ardeshir Babekhan, the brave and just, restored the Zoroastrian religion to its ancient purity. It is this religion—the true religion of ancient Persia—that was smothered by the conquered Arabs by means of blood and steel, and is only to-day retained in a slightly modified character by the few remaining Guebres of Yezd and Kerman, as well as by those who, sooner than sacrifice their religious convictions and their independence, preferred to abandon their native land, migrating to India with their families, where their successors are to be found to this day still conservative to their faith.

It is not too much to say that, although—in

the conglomeration of races that form the Indian Empire—the Parsees are few in number, not more than 100,000 all counted, they nevertheless occupy, through their honesty, intelligence and firmness of character, the foremost place in that country. But with these Parsees who migrated we have no space to deal here. We will merely see why the remainder escaped death at the hands of the Mahommedans, and, while ever remaining true to their religion, continued in Yezd and Kerman when, under the new rulers, almost the whole of the Zoroastrian population of Persia was compelled to embrace the religion of Islam.

The fact that Yezd and Kerman were two distant and difficult places of access for the invading Moslems, may be taken as the likely cause of the Zoroastrians collecting there. Also for the same reason, no doubt, the Arabs, tired of fighting and slaying, and having given way to luxury and vice, had become too lazy to carry on their wholesale slaughter of the Zoroastrian population. This leniency, however, has not done away entirely with constant tyrannical persecution and oppression of the unbelievers, so that now the number of Zoroastrians of Yezd does not exceed 7,000, and that of Kerman is under 3,000. A great many Zoroastrians have, notwithstanding their unwillingness, been since compelled to turn Mahommedans. Even fifty years ago the Zoroastrians of Yezd and Kerman called in Persia contemptuously “Guebres,” were subjected to degradations and restrictions of the worst kind. Now their condition, under a stronger govern-

ment and some foreign influence, has slightly ameliorated, but is not yet entirely secure against the cruelty, fanaticism, and injustice of the Mullahs and officials in the place.

If Yezd is, for its size, now the most enterprising trading centre of Persia, it is mostly due to the Guebres living there. Although held in contempt by the Mullahs and by the Mahomedans in general, these Guebres are manly fellows, sound in body and brain, instead of lascivious, demoralized, effeminate creatures like their tyrants. Hundreds of years of oppression have had little effect on the moral and physical condition of the Guebres. They are still as hardy and proud as when the whole country belonged to them ; nor has the demoralizing contact of the present race, to whom they are subject, had any marked effect on their industry, which was the most remarkable characteristic in the ancient Zoroastrians.

The Zoroastrian religion teaches that every man must earn his food by his own exertion and enterprise,—quite unlike the Mahomedan teaching, that the height of bliss is to live on the charity of one's neighbours, which rule, however, carries a counterbalancing conviction that the more money dispensed in alms, the greater the certainty of the givers obtaining after death a seat in heaven.

One of the most refreshing qualities of the Guebres (and of the Parsees in India) is that they are usually extraordinarily truthful for natives of Asia, and their morality, even in men, is indeed

quite above the average. There are few races among which marriages are conducted on more sensible lines and are more successful. The man and woman united by marriage live in friendly equality, and are a help to one another. Family ties are very strong, and are carried down even to distant relations, while the paternal and maternal love for their children, and touching filial love for their parents, is most praiseworthy and deserves the greatest admiration.

The Mussulmans themselves, although religiously at variance and not keen to follow the good example of the Guebres, admit the fact that the Zoroastrians are honest and good people. It is principally the Mullahs who are bitter against them and instigate the crowds to excesses. There is not such a thing for the Guebres as justice in Persia, and even up to quite recent times their fire temples and towers of silence were attacked and broken into by Mussulman crowds, the fires, so tenderly cared for, mercilessly put out : the sacred books destroyed, and the temples desecrated in the most insulting manner.

There are a number of Guebre places of worship in Yezd, and in the surrounding villages inhabited by Guebre agriculturists, but the principal one is in the centre of the Guebre quarter of Yezd city. It is a neat, small structure, very simple and whitewashed inside, with a fortified back room wherein the sacred fire is kept alight, well covered with ashes by a specially deputed priest. It is hidden so as to make it difficult for intending invaders to discover it ; and

the strong door, well protected by iron bars, wants a good deal of forcing before it can be knocked down.

The religious ceremony in the temple of the Guebres is very interesting, the officiating priests being dressed up in a long white garment, the *sudra*, held together by a sacred girdle, and with the lower portion of the face covered by a square piece of cloth like a handkerchief ; on the head they wear a peculiar cap. Various genuflexions, on a specially spread carpet, and bows are made and prayers read.

The priests belong generally to the better classes, and the rank is mostly hereditary. Certain ceremonies are considered necessary before the candidate can attain the actual dignity of a prelate. First of the ceremonies comes the *navar*, or six days' retreat in his own dwelling, followed by the ceremony of initiation ; four more days in the fire temple with two priests who have previously gone through the *Yasna* prayers for six consecutive mornings. Although after this he can officiate in some ceremonies, such as weddings, he is not fully qualified as a priest until the *Bareshnun* has been undergone and again the *Yasna*. The following day other prayers are offered to the guardian spirit, and at midnight the last ceremony takes place, and he is qualified to the degree of *Maratab*, when he can take part in any of the Zoroastrian rituals.

As a preliminary, great purity of mind and body are required from candidates, and they are made to endure lavish ablutions of water and



PARSEE PRIESTS OF YEZD OFFICIATING DURING CEREMONY IN THEIR
FIRE TEMPLE.

cow urine, clay and sand—an ancient custom, said to cleanse the body better than modern soaps. After that the candidate is secluded for nine whole days in the fire temple, and is not permitted to touch human beings, vegetation, water nor fire, and must wash himself twice more during that time, on the fourth day and on the seventh. It is only then that he is considered amply purified and able to go through the *Navar* ceremony.

The Zoroastrian religion is based on three excellent points—"good thoughts, good words, good deeds"—and as long as people adhere to them it is difficult to see how they can go wrong. They worship God and only one God, and do not admit idolatry. They are most open-minded regarding other people's notions, and are ever ready to recognise that other religions have their own good points.

Perhaps no greater libel was ever perpetrated on the Parsees than when they were put down as "fire-worshippers," or "worshippers of the elements." The Parsees are God-worshippers, but revere, not worship, fire and the sun as symbols of glory, heat, splendour, and purity; also because fire is to human beings one of the most necessary things in creation, if not indeed the most necessary thing; otherwise they are no more fire-worshippers than the Roman Catholics, for instance, who might easily come under the same heading, for they have lighted candles and lights constantly burning in front of images inside their churches.

Besides, it is not the fire itself, as fire, that Parsees nurse in their temples, but a fire specially purified for the purpose. The process is this: Several fires, if possible originally lighted by some natural cause, such as lightning, are brought in vases. Over one of these fires is placed a flat perforated tray of metal on which small pieces of very dry sandal-wood are made to ignite by the mere action of the heat, but must not actually come in contact with the flame below. From this fire a third one is lighted in a similar manner, and nine times this operation is repeated, each successive fire being considered purer than its predecessor, and the result of the ninth conflagration being pronounced absolutely pure.

It is really the idea of the purifying process that the Parsees revere more than the fire itself, and as the ninth fire alone is considered worthy to occupy a special place in their temples, so, in similarity to it, they aim in life to purify their own thoughts, words, and actions, and glorify them into "good thoughts, true words, noble actions." This is indeed very different from fire-worshipping of which the Parsees are generally accused.

In Yezd the Guebres told me that they possessed very few sacred books in their temple (or if they had them could not show them). They said that all the ancient books had been destroyed by the Mahommedans or had been taken away to India.

There were also several smaller temples in the

neighbourhood of Yezd, which had gone through a good many vicissitudes in their time, but now the Parsees and their places of worship are left in comparative peace. Parsee men and women are still compelled to wear special clothes so as to be detected at once in the streets, but this custom is gradually dying out. The women are garbed in highly-coloured striped garments, a short jacket and a small turban, leaving the face uncovered. The men are only allowed to wear certain specially-coloured cloaks and are not allowed to ride a horse in the streets of Yezd.

Parsees do not enjoy the civil rights of other citizens in Persia, and justice was until quite lately out of the question in the case of differences with Mussulmans. At death a man's property would be lawfully inherited by any distant relation who had adopted the religion of Moslem, instead of by the man's own children and wife who had remained faithful to their creed; and in the matter of recovering debts from Mussulmans the law of Persia is certainly very far indeed from helping a Guebre. This is necessarily a great obstacle in commercial intercourse.

Worst of all the burdens formerly inflicted upon the Guebres—as well as upon Armenians and Jews of Persia—was the "jazia" tax. Some thousand or so male Guebres of Yezd were ordered to pay the tax yearly, which with commissions and "squeezes" of Governors and officials was made to amount to some two thousand tomans, or about £400 at the present rate of exchange. Much severity and even

cruelty were enforced to obtain payment of the tax.

The Parsees were, until quite lately, debarred from undertaking any occupation that might place them on a level with Mahommedans. With the exception of a few merchants—who, by migrating to India and obtaining British nationality, returned and enjoyed a certain amount of nominal safety—the majority of the population consists of agriculturists and scavengers.

Mainly by the efforts of the Bombay Amelioration Society of the Parsees, the Guebres of Yezd and Kerman fare to-day comparatively well. The “jazia” has been abolished, and the present Shah and the local Government have to be congratulated on their fairness and consideration towards these fine people. May-be that soon they will be permitted to enjoy all the rights of other citizens, which they indeed fully deserve. Many steps have been made in that direction within the last few years. The Parsees are a most progressive race if properly protected. They are only too anxious to lead the way in all reformation, and, with all this, are remarkable for their courteousness and refined manner.

The most prominent members of the Yezd community, especially the sons of Meheban Rustam, have been the pioneers of trade between Yezd and India. Besides the excellent Parsee school, several other institutions have been established in Yezd and its suburbs by the Bombay Society, supported by a few charitable Parsees of

Bombay and some of the leading members of the Parsee community in Yezd. The Bombay Society has done much to raise the Zoroastrians of Persia to their present comparatively advanced state, but trade and commerce also have to a great extent contributed to their present eminence.

The Bombay Society nominates and sends an agent to reside in Teheran, the capital of Persia, to look after the interests of helpless Zoroastrians, and the Parsees of Yezd have moreover a national assembly called the Anguman-i-Nasseri.

I was entertained by this interesting body of men, and received from their president, Ardeshir Meheban Irani, much of the valuable information here given about the Yezd Parsees. The Association has an elected body of twenty-eight members, all honorary, the most venerable and intelligent of the community, and its aims are to advocate the social rights of the Zoroastrians as a race, to settle disputes arising between the individuals of the community, to defend helpless Parsees against Moslem wantonness, and to improve their condition generally.

The Association was established on the 3rd of February, 1902, by the late Mr. Kaikosroo Firendaz Irani, the then agent of the Bombay Society. In this work he had the advice and help of the leading men of the community.

There are several naturalised British subjects in Yezd, including the President of the Association—who speaks and writes English as well as any Englishman—but it is greatly to be regretted that these men cannot obtain proper protection

from the British Government. Yet these fellows could be of very great assistance to England in spreading British influence in Yezd, not to speak of increasing British trade—which they are only too anxious to do, if a chance is given them—in conjunction with the representatives of their race in Bombay—the most Anglicised, except in religion, of all our subject races of India. There was formerly a British Vice-Consul in Yezd, but for some reason known to the Government, while Russia finds it expedient to establish Consular agents in all the principal centres of Persia, we have actually withdrawn our representative even from so important a city as Yezd!

The Parsee communities of Yezd and Bombay are in constant communication with each other, and it is well known what marvellous prosperity these fugitives of Fars have now attained in Bombay, through their honesty and hard work, especially since their connection with the British, whose civilisation, with the exception of religion and the hat, they have entirely adopted. Most of them speak perfect English, and many of the sons of the wealthier Parsees have been educated at universities in England. We find them working banking houses on a large scale, and cotton mills, running lines of steamers and shipbuilding yards. They trade considerably with the Far East and Far West, and with every nook in Asia. Even as far as Samarkand, Bokhara, Siberia, Nijni-Novgorod, and St. Petersburg, Parsee traders are to be found, and in Japan, China, the United States, and Canada. With England they carry on a

very extensive trade, and through them as intermediaries much of the import trade into India finds its way into neighbouring markets more difficult of access to the direct British exporter.

One of the most noticeable traits of the flourishing Parsees of Bombay is their extreme generosity, often hampered by petty, stupid, Anglo-Indian officialdom, which they seem to stand with amazing patience and good-nature. We find well appointed hospitals erected by them ; schools, clubs, and only lately one of the richest of all Parsees, Mr. Jamsetsji Tata, has given the city of Bombay no less a gift than a quarter of a million pounds for the erection of a university on the most modern lines in that city.

CHAPTER XL

Badjirs—Below the sand level—Chappar service between Yezd and Kerman—The elasticity of a farsakh—Sar-i-Yezd—An escort—Where three provinces meet—Etiquette—Robbers' impunity—A capital story—Zen-u-din—The Serde Kuh range—Desert—Sand accumulations—Kermanshah—The Darestan and Godare Hashimshan Mountains—Chappar Khana inscriptions and ornamentations by travellers—Shemsh.

The most characteristic objects in Yezd are the *badjirs*, a most ingenious device for catching the wind and conveying it down into the various rooms of dwelling. These *badjirs* are on the same principle as the ventilating cowls of ships. The ventilating shafts are usually very high and quadrangular, with two, three, or more openings on each side at the summit and corresponding channels to convey the wind down into the room below. The lower apertures of the channels are blocked except on the side where the wind happens to blow, and thus a draught is created from the top downwards, sweeping the whole room and rendering it quite cool and pleasant even in the hottest days of summer. The reason that one finds so many of these high *badjirs* in Yezd is probably that, owing to constant accu-

mulations of sand, the whole city is now below the level of the surrounding desert, and some device had to be adopted to procure fresh air inside the houses and protect the inhabitants from the suffocating lack of ventilation during the stifling heat of the summer. The *badjirs* are certainly constructed in a most scientific or, rather, practical manner, and answer the purpose to perfection.

When we leave Yezd the city itself cannot be seen at all, but just above the sand of the desert rise hundreds of these quadrangular towers, some very large indeed, which give the place a quaint appearance.

From Yezd to Kerman there is again a service of post-horses, so I availed myself of it in order to save as much time as possible. The horses were not much used on this road so they were excellent.

I departed from Yezd on October 26th, and soon after leaving the city and riding through the usual plentiful but most unattractive ruins, we were travelling over very uninteresting country, practically a desert. We passed two villages—Najafabat and Rachmatabad—and then wound our way through avenues of dried-up mulberry trees at Mahommedabad or Namadawat, a village where silk-worms are reared in quantities, which accounts for the extensive mulberry plantations to provide food for them. The village is large and is three farsakhs from Yezd, or something like ten miles.

The “farsakh”—the most elastic measure

ever invented—decreases here to just above three miles, whereas further north it averaged four miles.

In a strong wind we rode on, first on sand, then on gravelly soil, ever through dreary, desolate country. The villages, Taghiabad, Zehnawat, etc, get smaller and poorer and further apart, and some eight farsakhs from Yezd we eventually reach the small town of Sar-i-Yezd. From Namadawat the country was an absolutely flat gravel plain with no water.

At Sar-i-Yezd (Altitude 4,980 feet) we were detained some time. The highest official in the place had received orders from the Governor of Yezd not to let me proceed without a strong guard to accompany me. This was rather a nuisance than otherwise, for, although the country between Sar-i-Yezd and Anar was reported infested by robbers, we really should have been able to hold our own against them even without the rabble that was sent to accompany us.

After a delay of some hours five soldiers—as picturesque as they would have been useless in case of danger—put in an appearance. They had old long muzzle loaders, which must have been more dangerous to the person firing them than to the ones fired at, and they wore elaborate leather belts with two ample pouches for lead bullets, two gunpowder flasks made of desiccated sheep testicles, a leather bag for small shot, and a large iron ring with small clips for caps. Horses could not be procured for these men, so



INTERIOR OF OLD CARAVANSERAI WITH CENTRAL WATER TANK.

they had to follow my baggage on foot, which caused a further delay.

We left shortly before sunset as I intended marching the whole night. There was a great discussion among these soldiers about crossing over into Kerman territory, four farsakhs beyond Sar-i-Yezd, and just at the point where the robbers are supposed to attack caravans the guard, whether through fear or otherwise, declined to come on. Sadek remonstrated most bitterly, but three of them left us, while two said they had been entrusted with orders to see me and my luggage safely to the place where another guard could be obtained and would continue. I tried to persuade them to go back too, but they would not.

It appears that between Sar-i-Yezd and 'Zen-ud-din there is an expanse of waste land near the boundary of the Yezd, Kerman and Farsistan (Shiraz) provinces, the possession of which is declared by the Governors of all these provinces not to belong to them, the boundary having never been properly defined. So robbers can carry on their evil deeds with comparative immunity, as they do not come under the jurisdiction of any of the three Governors in question. Moreover, if chased by Yezd soldiers, they escape into Shiraz or Kerman territory, and if pursued by Kerman troops they escape into either of the neighbouring provinces, while the Governor of Shiraz, being the furthest and least interested in that distant corner of his province, really never knows and probably does not care to learn what

takes place in so remote and barren a spot. In any case he will not be held responsible for anything happening there. It would certainly involve him in too great expense and difficulty to send soldiers to live so far into the desert, and unless in great force they could be of little assistance to caravans ; so that, as things stand, robber bands have it all their own way.

Strict etiquette is observed between Governors of provinces and their subordinates, and an encroachment on one's neighbour's territory would be considered a most outrageous breach of good manners and respective rights.

Still travelling quite fast across sand, and with no brigands in sight, we went on, pleasantly entertained by the astounding yarns of the two remaining soldiers. We were told how, twenty years ago, a foreign doctor—nationality unknown—being attacked by a band of thirty robbers, produced a small bottle of foreign medicine—presumably a most highly concentrated essence of chloroform—from his waistcoat pocket and, having removed the cork, the thirty brigands immediately fell on all sides in a deep sleep. The doctor and his party then continued their journey quietly, and returned several days later with a number of soldiers, who had no trouble in despatching the robbers from a temporary into an eternal sleep, without their waking up at all !

On being asked how it was that the doctor himself remained awake when such a powerful narcotic was administered, the narrator did not lose his presence of mind nor his absence of con-

science, and said the doctor had, during the operation, held his nose tight with his two fingers. The doctor had since been offered thousands of tomans for the precious bottle, but would not part with it.

The soldiers told us a great many more stories of this type, and they recounted them with such an *aplomb* and seriousness that they nearly made one fall off one's saddle with laughter. Every now and then they insisted on firing off their rifles, which I requested them to do some distance away from my horses. There were no mishaps.

At Sar-i-Yezd I had not been able to obtain fresh horses, so the Yezd horses had been taken on, with an additional donkey. They had gone splendidly, and we arrived at Zen-u-din shortly after ten o'clock at night.

Solitary, in the middle of the desert, and by the side of a salt water well, stands Zen-u-din (Alt. 5,170 feet). There is a chappar station, and a tumbling-down, circular caravanserai with massively built watch-towers. These appeared much battered as if from the result of repeated attacks.

We left our soldier protectors behind here, and two more military persons, in rags and with obsolete guns, insisted on accompanying us, but as they were on foot and would have delayed us considerably I paid them off, a hundred yards from Zen-u-din, and sent them back.

There are mountains extending from the north-east to the south-east, the Serde Kuh range, and

to the south-east they are quite close to the track and show low passes a mile or so apart by which the range could easily be crossed. To the west also we have high hills, some three or four miles apart from the mountains to the north-east, and to the north an open desert as far as Yezd. We notice here again the curious accumulations of sand high up on the south mountain side, and also to the south-west of the mountain range east of us.

At ten in the morning, after a dreary ride through desolate country, we reached the small village of Kermanshah (5,300 feet), where a post station and caravanserai were to be found, a few trees and, above all, some good drinking water. From Zen-u-din to Kermanshah, a distance of sixteen miles (five farsakhs), we had seen only one solitary tree to the south-west of the track.

We had now rugged mountains about a mile to the west and south-west. These were ranges parallel to one another, the Darestan mountains being the nearest to us and the Godare Hashimshan behind them further south-west.

While I was waiting for fresh horses to be got ready I amused myself at every station studying the curious inscriptions and ornamentations by scribbling travellers on the caravanserai and post-house walls. Laboriously engraved quotations from the Koran were the most numerous, then the respective names of travellers, in characters more or less elaborate according to the education of the writer, and generally accompanied by a



TYPICAL CARAVANSERAI AND MUD FORT IN THE DESERT BETWEEN YEZD AND KERMAN



A TRADE CARAVANSERAI, KERMAN.

record of the journey, place of birth, and destination of the scribbler. Occasionally one was startled by a French inscription in sickening terms of humility, the work of Persian minor officials in Government employ, who thus made a public exhibition of their knowledge of a foreign language and expounded in glowing terms their servile admiration for superiors.

More interesting were the records of illiterate travellers who, in default of literature, placed one arm and hand upon the whitewashed wall and traced their silhouette with the point of a knife or a bit of charcoal or a brush held in the other hand.

Then came those still more artistically inclined, who ventured into conventionalised representations of the peacock with widely-expanded tail—the most favourite and frequent of Persian outbursts of Chappar khana art, and probably the most emblematic representation of Persian character. The conventionalised peacock is represented in a few lines, such as one sees on the familiar Persian brass trays.

The Shah's portrait with luxuriant moustache is met in most Chappar khanas scraped somewhere upon the wall, and not infrequently other whole human figures drawn in mere lines, such as children do in our country, but with a greater profusion of anatomical detail. Very frequent indeed are the coarse representations of scenes in daily life, which we generally prefer to leave unrecorded—in fact, the artistic genius of the Persian traveller seems to run very much in that

direction, and these drawings are generally the most elaborate of all, often showing signs of multiple collaboration.

Horses fully harnessed are occasionally attempted, but I never saw a camel represented. Only once did I come across a huge representation of a ship or a boat. Small birds drawn with five or six lines only, but quite characteristic of conventionalised Persian art, were extremely common, and were the most ingeniously clever of the lot. Centipedes and occasional scorpions were now and then attempted with much ingenuity and faithfulness of detail but no artistic merit.

All these ornamentations, studied carefully, taught one a good deal of Persian character. That the Persian is very observant and his mind very analytical, is quite out of the question, but his fault lies in the fact that in art as in daily life minor details strike him long before he can grasp the larger and more important general view of what he sees. He prefers to leave that to take care of itself. We find the same characteristics not only in his frivolous Chappar khana art—where he can be studied unawares and is therefore quite natural—but in his more serious art, in his music, in his business transactions, in his political work. The lack of simplicity which we notice in his rude drawings can be detected in everything else he does, and the evident delight which he takes in depicting a peacock with its tail spread in all its glory is nothing more and nothing less than an expression of what the Persian feels within himself in relation to his neighbours.

Nothing has a greater fascination for him than outward show and pomp. He cares for little else, and a further proof of this unhappy vain-glory is obtained by the study of the wall scrolls of the travelling public—whether travelling officially or for trading purposes—representing in Persia usually the most go-ahead and intelligent section of the Persian population.

On we go along the dreary track, again on flat, desolate country of sand and stones at the spur of the mountains to the west and south-west. Sand deposits rise at a gentle gradient up to half the height of these mountains, well padding their slopes. The track here leads us due south to a low pass at an altitude of 5,680 feet. One gets so tired of the monotonous scenery that one would give anything to perceive something attractive; nor is the monotony of the journey diminished by two other miserable nagging soldiers who have clung to us as an escort from Kermanshah, and who are running after our horses moaning and groaning and saying they are starved and tired and have not received their pay nor their food from the Government for several months.

On the other side of the pass there is a basin encircled by mountains, except to the south-east, where we find an open outlet. The track goes south-south-east through this yellow plain, and on proceeding across we find several conical black mounds with curious patches of a verdigris colour. To the east rises a low sand dune.

We come in sight of Shemsh, a most forlorn,

cheerless place. Sadek gallops ahead with the *horjins*, in which he has the cooking pans, some dead fowls, and a load of vegetables and pomegranates, and I slow down to give him time to prepare my lunch. I arrived at the place at 2.45 P.M. There was only a desolate caravan-serai and a Chappar khana.

On the Yezd-Kerman track there are not more than three horses at each post station—at some there are only two,—and as I required no less than five horses, or, if possible, six, I always had to take on the deficient number of horses from the previous stations. I generally gave these horses two or three hours' rest, but it made their marches very long indeed, as it must be remembered that on my discharging them they must at once return to their point of departure. Fortunately, the traffic was so small by this road that the horses were in good condition, and so I was able to proceed at a good rate all along. Occasionally, one or two horses had to be taken on for three consecutive stages, which, taking as an average six farsakhs for each stage, made the distance they had to travel, including return journey, six stages, or some 120 miles in all.

The altitude of Shemsh was 5,170 feet.

CHAPTER XLI

Desolate scenery—Anar—A word for Persian servants—Sadek's English—Bayas village—Sand deposits—Robber villagers—Kushkuhyeh Chappar khana—The post contractor, his rifle—Cotton cultivation—Fast growing Rafsenju—Trade tracks—Hindu merchants—Sadek and the Chappar boy—Kafer-han—Photography and women—A flat, salty stretch of clay and sand—The Kuh Djupahr peaks—Robat women—Baghih—Attractive girls—*Mirage*—Arrival in Kerman.

I LEFT Shemsh two hours later, at 4.30, and we travelled over slightly undulating country on sandy ground with occasional tracts of stones and gravel. If possible, this part was even more desolate than the scenery we had found before reaching here, and not a vestige of vegetation or animal life could be detected anywhere. When night descended upon us we had glorious moonlight to brighten our way, and we marched on gaily—this time without the nuisance of an escort—until we arrived at Anar at 9.30 P.M.—seven farsakhs (about 22 miles) from Shemsh.

From what one could see during our short stay in the night there appeared to be a large village, mostly in ruins, with a few trees and a mud fort. We had gradually descended here to 4,800 feet. The water was quite good. We

only allowed ourselves three hours to have our dinner and sleep, and I ordered the horses to be ready shortly after midnight.

And here, whatever other faults they may have, a word of commendation must be put in for the endurance of Persian servants. It is all very well for one's self to do with little sleep, but servants who will go days and days without any at all, and without a word of complaint or sign of collapse, are retainers not easily found and not to be despised. Certainly, one seldom obtains such qualities in European servants. After doing fifty or sixty miles on the saddle we would get off, and I rested awhile, writing up my notes or, if at night, changing plates in my cameras, but Sadek never had any rest at all. No sooner had we jumped off our horses than he had to undo the saddles and unpack the baggage and kill fowls and cook my meals, which all took him some little time ; then he had to wash or clean up everything and repack, and run about the villages to purchase provisions, and all this kept him well employed until the hour of departure ; so that, even when I could put in a couple of hours' sleep of a night, he never had time to sleep at all. Sleeping on the saddle, of course, was usual when we travelled by caravan, but was impossible when chapparing. So that he had to go several days at a time without a moment's wink.

The remarkable facility with which, under these trying circumstances, he got most excellent meals ready at all hours of the day or night and

in the most outlandish places, and the magic way in which he could produce fuel and make a fire out of the most unlikely materials, was really extraordinary. True, he took himself and his work most seriously and his pride lay principally in having no reproach about the cooking.

He had a smattering of English that was very quaint. Everything above ground he called "upstairs"; anything on the ground or below was "downstairs." Thus, to mount and dismount a horse was laconically expressed "horse upstairs," "horse downstairs." Similarly, to lie down was "downstairs," to get up "upstairs." Anything involving violent motion was "shoot," by which single word to fall, to kick, to bite, to drop, to jump, to throw away, were defined. He possessed a good vocabulary of swear words—which he had learnt from sailors at Bushire—and these served him well when anything went wrong; but I forbade him to use them in my presence as I wished to have the monopoly myself, and thus his English vocabulary was very much curtailed. The remainder of his English conversation applied entirely to cooking chickens.

Shortly after midnight we moved out of the Chappar khana, and, barring some slight cultivation in the immediate neighbourhood of the village, we soon entered again upon the flat, sandy desert. We had a lovely full moon over us, which added to the pleasure of travelling, and we rode on to Bayas (five farsakhs), some seventeen or eighteen miles, where we arrived at five in the

morning. The altitude of this place was exactly the same as that of Anar, 4,800 feet.

Bayas is a tiny village with a few mulberry trees and a small stream of water. It has a fair caravanserai. We rested the horses for a couple of hours, while I had breakfast, and by 7.30 A.M. we were again in our saddles.

To the south-west and north-east by east we again perceived the familiar high sand deposits, all along the base of the mountain ranges, and they reached up to two-thirds of the height of the mountains, forming a smooth, inclined plane rising very gently from the flat desert on which we were travelling. To the north-east by east the sand-banks rose nearly to the summit of the hill range.

Sadek and the chappar boy pointed out to me a village to the north-east of the track, and informed me that all its inhabitants were robbers and murderers. In fact upon the road, we came across a poor boy crying, and bruised all over. We asked him what was the matter. He pointed to three men in the distance who were running away, and said they had beaten him and stolen his money, two krans, and two pomegranates. Sure enough, when we galloped to the men and stopped them they did not wait to be accused but handed me at once both fruit and money to be returned to their rightful owner.

These folks had very brutal faces, framed in flowing locks of shaggy hair. They were garbed in long thick coats of white felt, made entirely of one piece, and quite stiff, with sleeves sticking

out at the sides, into which the arms were never to be inserted. There were two red and blue small circular ornamentations at the bottom of the coat in front, and one in the centre of the back, as on Japanese kimonos.

We began to see more habitations now, and about one mile north-east of the track we perceived the villages of Esmalawat, Aliabad, and Sher-i-fabad,—the latter quite a large place. We still went on over sand and white salt deposits.

Poor Sadek was so tired and sleepy that he fell off his horse a couple of times. The soil got very stony on getting near Kushkuhyeh (Altitude 4,900 feet), where we entered the Chappar khana exactly at noon.

The contractor of the postal service lived at this village, and he was extremely civil. As many as eight horses were in his stable, and he ordered that the best should be given me. He entertained me to tea and took the keenest interest in my rifles. He also possessed one of the familiar discarded British Martini military rifles, specially decorated for the Persian market—a rifle worth at its most a pound sterling, or two, but for which he had paid no less than 100 tomans (about £20). The smugglers of firearms must have made huge profits on the sale of these antiquated weapons, for firearms are among the few articles for which large sums of ready money can be obtained in Persia.

This particular man now took a great fancy to my .256 Mannlicher, and jokingly said he would not let me proceed until I had sold it to him.

He produced large sums in solid silver to tempt me, about four times the value of the rifle, and was greatly upset when I assured him that I would not part with the rifle at all.

When I left, he accompanied me part of the way, some few hundred yards, and he took with him his Martini and a belt full of cartridges ; his servant who followed him was also similarly armed. On inquiring of him why master and servant loaded themselves with arms and ammunition to go such a short distance, he replied that it was not safe for him to go unarmed even one yard out of his house. One of his friends had been murdered only a few days before, and one never knows in Persia when one's turn will come next. In out-of-the-way places in Persia private revenge is extremely common, which generally takes the form of shooting one's adversary in the back.

There seemed to be abundance of water at Kushkuhyeh, and the fields were properly irrigated. Cultivation seemed prosperous, and vast cotton plantations were to be seen all round. When we passed, hundreds of men, women and children were busy taking in the cotton, and scores of camels, donkeys, sheep and goats grazing were dotting the green patch in the landscape. This gay scene of active life and verdure was all the more refreshing after the many miles of sand and gravel and barren hills of which we had grown so weary since leaving Yezd.

Two hours were wasted for lunch, and off we went again. On leaving behind Kushkuhyeh

we also left behind vegetation, and again we sank in sand. A few tamarisk shrubs were scattered here and there on the large plain we were traversing, bounded on all sides by distant mountains.

Three and a half farsakhs (about 13 miles) saw us at Hemmatawat, a large walled enclosure.

At 6.30 P.M. we entered the small town of Barawamad (Bahramabad)—altitude 5,150 feet—or Rafsenju as it is called now by its new name. This is a fast-growing place of quite modern origin, and it owes most of its prosperity to the extensive cultivation of cotton, exported from here direct to the Persian Gulf and India.

Besides the route on which we are travelling there are several other tracks leading out of Barawamad. A minor one runs in a north-easterly direction, over the Dehring Mountains to the Seroenan district, where many villages are to be found, and then turns sharply south-east *viâ* Zerend to Kerman. It is also possible, when once one has crossed into Seroenan, to continue to Lawah (Rawar) and then, across the Salt Desert, to Meshed or to Birjand.

To the Persian Gulf there are three tracks. One south-west by west to Sher-i-balek, from which place the traveller has the option to travel to Bushire (*viâ* Shiraz) or to Lingah or to Bandar Abbas *viâ* Forg. Two different tracks, to Reshitabad and Bidu, join at Melekabad (south-west) and these eventually enter the Kerman-Shiraz-Bushire track; while another track, the most in use, goes almost due south, direct to Bidu,

skirting the Pariz Mountains on their westerly slopes. This track, too, crosses the Kerman-Shiraz route at Saidabad, and proceeds due south to Bandar Abbas.

The few Hindoo merchants of Kerman come here during the cotton season to make their purchases and send their goods direct to Bandar Abbas for shipment to India. Pottery of an inferior kind is manufactured at Rafsenju.

We left the Chappar khana at midnight in a terrific cold wind, and this time on shockingly bad horses. They were tired and lame, the cold wind probably intensifying the rheumatic pains from which most of them were suffering. The country was undulating and we gradually rose to 5,700 feet. The horses gave us no end of trouble and we had to walk the greater portion of the night.

Sadek, five feet two in height, and the Chappar boy, six feet two, came to words and soon after to most sonorous blows. To add to our comfort, the Chappar boy, who got the worst of the scrimmage, ran away, and it was only at sunrise that we perceived him again a long way off following us, not daring to get too near. Eventually, by dint of sending him peaceful messages by a caravan man who passed us, Sadek induced him to return, and still struggling in the sand of the desolate country all round us, and our horses sinking quite deep into it, we managed to drag men, horses, and loads into Kafter-han (Kebuter-han)—altitude 5,680 feet— at 8.30 in the morning, where we were glad to

get relays of fresh steeds. We had gone about twenty-eight miles from the last station.

A few mud huts, an ice store-house, a flour mill, a high building, said to have been an arsenal, the usual caravanserai, and a dingy Chappar khana were all, quite all one could rest one's eye upon at Kafter-han. There was some cultivation, but nothing very luxuriant. The few inhabitants were quite interested in the sudden appearance of a *ferenghi* (a foreigner). The women, who were not veiled here, were quite good-looking, one girl particularly, whose photograph I snatched before she had time to run away to hide herself—the usual effect of a camera on Persian women, quite the reverse to its effects on the European fair sex.

We left almost directly on better animals, and proceeded south-east having lofty rugged hills to the north-east, east, and south of us, with the usual high sand accumulations upon their sides. To the south-east we could just discern the distant mountains near Kerman. The track itself, on the sandy embankment at the foot of the hillside to the south-west, is rather high up and tortuous, owing to a very long salt marsh which fills the lower portion of the valley during the rainy weather and makes progress in a straight line impossible. But now, owing to the absolute absence of rain for months and months, the marsh was perfectly dry and formed a flat white plastered stretch of clay, sand and salt, as smooth as a billiard-table, and not unlike an immense floor prepared for tennis-courts. The dried salt

mud was extremely hard, our horses' hoofs leaving scarcely a mark on it. I reckoned the breadth of this flat, white expanse at one and a half miles, and its length a little over eleven miles. Two high peaks stood in front of us to the south-east, the Kuh Djupahr, forming part of a long range extending in a south-east direction.

At a distance of four farsakhs (about thirteen miles), and directly on the other side of the dried-up salt stretch, we came to another Chappar khana, at the village of Robat. There were a good many women about in front of the huge caravanserai, and they looked very ridiculous in the tiny short skirts like those of ballet girls, and not particularly clean, over tight trousers quite adhering to the legs.

We have the same mountains on both sides, and we continue over undulating ground, the valley getting somewhat narrower as we proceed towards Baghih. Six or seven miles from Kafterhan was Esmaratabad village, a mass of ruins, and ten miles or so a large village, still in fair preservation, Sadi, with some vegetation, principally wheat. The track lay mostly over a stony, barren desert, with here and there, miles and miles apart, a forced patch of green.

Baghih, our last halt before reaching Kerman, was nine farsakhs from Kafterhan. It stood at an elevation of 5,740 feet, and had plenty of excellent water. The village was large, with handsome walled gardens and nicely-kept wheat-fields all round. The inhabitants were most affable

and civil, and the women and children particularly simple and attractive. The girls were attired in longer and more graceful skirts than the damsels of Robat, and did not leave the leg exposed even as high as the knee. Over it they had an ample shirt with wide short sleeves, showing their gracefully modelled and well rounded arms, adorned with metal bracelets. On the head was a kerchief neatly bound quite tight over the head by means of a ribbon.

It was not possible to get fresh horses here, and mine were very tired or I would have continued to Kerman the same evening, completing the journey from Yezd (220 miles) in three days. We had arrived early in the afternoon, and had I not been compelled to take on the tired horses for the remaining four farsakhs (13 miles) I could have easily reached Kerman before the gates of the city were closed at sunset. As it was, I had to give it up, and had to sleep the night at Baghih, making an early start on Wednesday, the 30th.

Baghih is actually south-west of Kerman, and the track makes this long detour to avoid the Bademan Mountains to the north. It thus passes over comparatively level land in the valley between that range and the Kuh Djupahr, the track turning here sharply to the north-east, in which direction, when we get to the highest point of the track (5,980 feet) one and a half farsakhs from Baghih, we can almost discern Kerman in the distance. Except to the north-west we have high mountains all round, the highest being the Djupahr to the south-east, and of

which we now get a most lovely view, and also of the whole Kerman plain with its innumerable semi-spherical sand-hills.

At the foot of the Djupahr below us we see the two villages of Kheirabad and Akhibarabad, with many trees and some cultivation round them. On descending into the Kerman plain we have deceiving effects of mirage, lovely lakes on both sides and streams of water, but on the rising of a gentle breeze, limpid lakes and streams suddenly disappear, and the whole plain is nothing but a big undulating stretch of yellow sand, until we arrive within almost a stone's-throw of the city gates of Kerman.

At 11 A.M. on Wednesday, October the 30th, I halted at the palatial Chappar khana of Kerman, just outside the city wall, in a handsome garden, having accomplished the journey from Yezd in four days, including halts.

CHAPTER XLII

Kerman — The *Ark* or citadel — Civility of the natives — Europeans — The British Consulate — Major Phillott — H. E. Ala-el-Mulk, Governor of Kerman — Soldiers — Teaching music to recruits — Preparation for the campaign against the Beluch — Cloth manufacture.

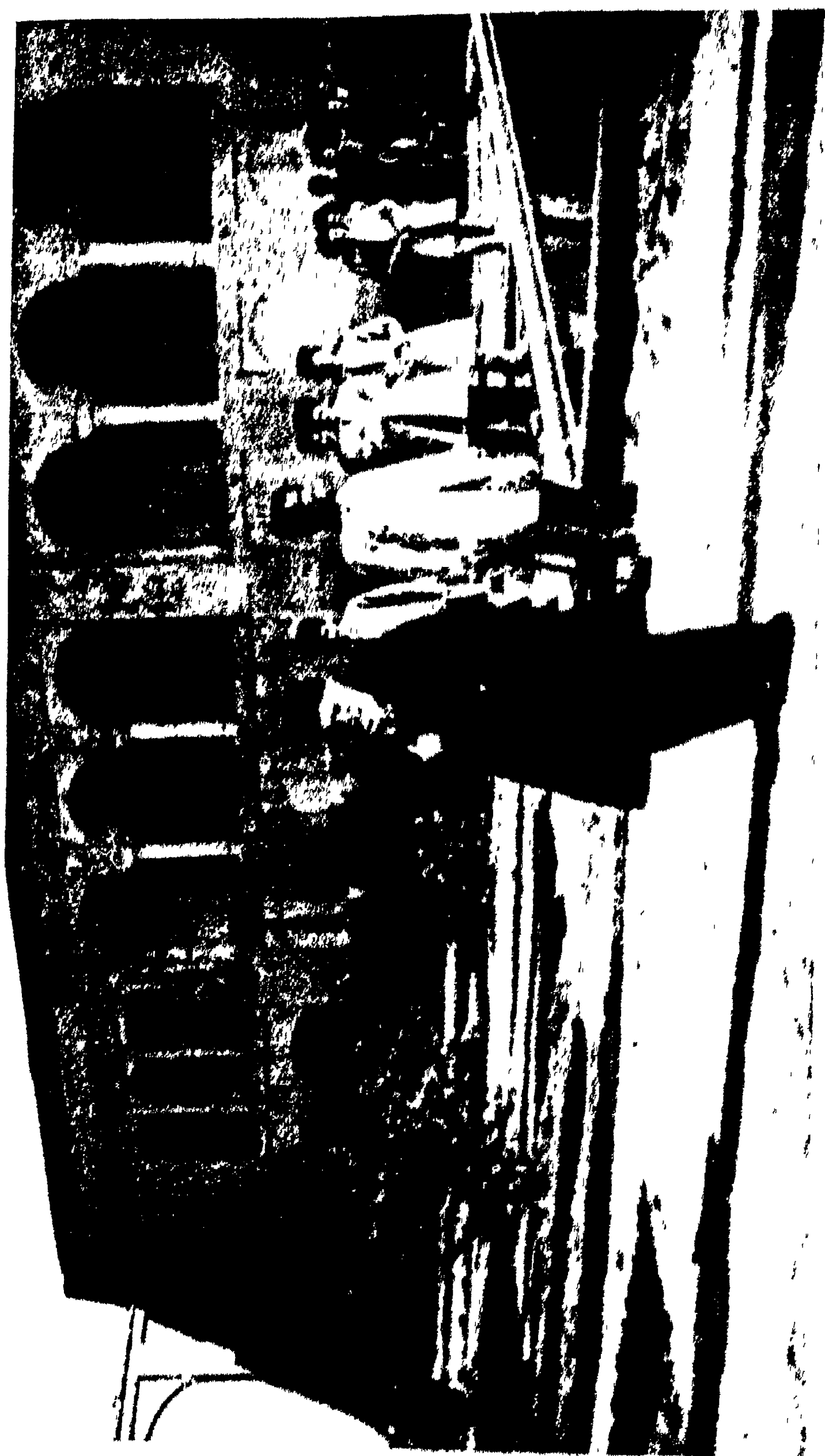
It was my intention to pay my respects to the British Consul for whom I had letters of introduction from the Minister at Teheran, and I at once proceeded through the city, entering first the “Ark” or citadel, and then the south-west gate with two side columns of green and blue tiles in a spiral design and pointed archway, into the Meidan—a fine rectangular square of great length and breadth. Sentries posted at the gates of the city and at the sides of the square saluted, and also many of the people along the road. This extraordinary civility was very refreshing in a country where one only expects extreme rudeness from the lower classes.

We entered the vaulted bazaar, the main big artery of Kerman city, intersected about half-way by a tortuous street from north to south and by other minor narrow lanes, and crowded with people, donkeys, camels and mules ; and here,

too, one was rather surprised to see various merchants get up in their shops salaaming as I passed, and to receive a "Salameleko" and a bow from most men on the way. The bazaar itself, being in appearance more ancient than those of Yezd, Isfahan and Teheran, was more alluring and had many quaint bits. It bore, however, very much the same characteristics as all other bazaars of Persia. At the end of it on the north-east we emerged into an open space with picturesque awnings, suspended mats, and spread umbrellas shading innumerable baskets of delicious green figs, trays of grapes, and pomegranates, piles of water-melons and vegetables of all sorts.

No Europeans live within the wall of Kerman city itself, and at the time of my visit there were only four Europeans altogether residing in the neighbourhood of the town. Two missionaries, husband and wife; a gentleman who, misled by representations, had been induced to come from India to dig artesian wells at great expense—in a country where the natives are masters at finding water and making aqueducts—and our most excellent Consul, Major Phillott, one of the most practical and sensible men that ever lived.

The Consulate was at Zeris or Zirisf, some little distance to the east of the town. We passed through a graveyard on leaving the inhabited district, and had in front of us some ancient fortifications on the rocky hills to the south, which we skirted, and then came to some



huge conical ice-houses—very old, but still in excellent preservation. We passed the solidly-built and foreign-looking gateway of the Bagh-i-Zeris, and a little further at the end of a short avenue the British flag could be seen flying upon a gate.

As I came upon him a ragged infantry soldier, who, being at his dinner, was busy licking his fingers, sprang to his feet and made a military salute. Having passed through a court and a garden and a series of dismantled rooms I found myself in the Consulate, where I was greeted effusively by Major Phillott, who had no idea I was coming, and who, owing to my being very much sun-tanned, had at first mistaken me for a Persian ! He would not hear of my remaining at the Chappar khana, and most kindly sent at once for all my luggage to be brought up to the Consulate. The hospitality of Englishmen in Persia is really unbounded.

H. E. Ala-el-Mulk, Governor of Kerman, called on the Consul that same afternoon, and I was able to present the letter I had brought to him. Having lived long in Europe Ala-el-Mulk is a most fluent French scholar, and, being a man of considerable talent, sense, and honesty he is rather adverse to the empty show and pomp which is ever deemed the necessary accompaniment of high-placed officials in Persia. He can be seen walking through the town with only a servant or two, or riding about inspecting every nook of his city hardly attended at all. This, curiously enough, has not shocked the natives as

people feared, but, on the contrary, has inspired them with intense respect for the new Governor, whose tact, gentleness, consideration and justice were fully appreciated by the whole town ; so that, after all, it is pleasant to notice that the lower classes of Persia have more common sense and power of differentiation than they have hitherto been credited with.

“ When I want anything well done,” said the Governor to me, “ I do it myself. I want the welfare of my people and am only glad when I can see with my own eyes that they get it. I inspect my soldiers, I see them drilled before me ; I go to the bazaar to talk to the people, and any one can come to talk to me. Nobody need be afraid of coming to me ; I am ever ready to listen to all.”

Although this innovation in the system of impressing the crowds created somewhat of a sensation at first, the Governor soon managed to impress the people with his own personality, and he is now extraordinarily popular among all classes, except the semi-official, who cannot carry on their usual extortions with impunity.

He asked me to go and inspect his troops, whom he had drilled before his own eyes every morning, and undoubtedly, of all the soldiers I had seen in Persia, they were the only ones—barring the Cossack regiments drilled by Russians—that had a real military appearance and were trained according to a method. They were better dressed, better fed, and more disciplined even than the soldiers of Teheran.

The teaching of music to recruits for the band was quite interesting. The musical notes were written on a black-board and the young fellows were made to sing them out in a chorus until they had learnt the whole melody by heart. The boys had most musical voices and quite good musical ears, while their powers of retention of what they were taught were quite extraordinary, when it was considered that these fellows were recruited from the lowest and most ignorant classes.

The garrison of Kerman was armed with Vrandel rifles, an old, discarded European pattern, but quite serviceable. Anyhow, all the men possessed rifles of one and the same pattern, which was an advantage not noticeable in the Teheran troops, for instance. For Persians, they went through their drill in an accurate and business-like manner, mostly to the sound of three drums, and also with a capital band playing European brass instruments.

The Governor took special delight in showing me several tents which he had had specially manufactured for his approaching campaign, in conjunction with British troops from British Beluchistan, against marauding Beluch tribes who had been very troublesome for some time, and who, being so close to the frontier, were able to evade alike Persian, Beluch, and British law, until a joint movement against them was made from west and east. H. E. Ala-el-Mulk told me that he intended to command the expedition himself.

Ala-el-Mulk, a man extraordinarily courteous and simple in manner, was former Persian Ambassador in Constantinople. Through no fault of his own, owing to certain customs prevalent at the Sultan's court, the Shah during his visit to Constantinople was unreasonably displeased, and the Ambassador was recalled. The Governorship of distant Kerman was given him, but a man like Ala-el-Mulk, one of the ablest men in Persia, would be more useful in a higher position nearer the capital, if not in the capital itself. Kerman is a very out-of-the-way place, and of no very great importance just yet, although, if Persia develops as she should, it will not be many years from the present time before Kerman becomes a place of great importance to England.

However, Ala-el-Mulk is, above all, a philosopher, and he certainly makes the best of his opportunities. He has to contend with many difficulties, intrigue, false dealing, and corruption being rampant even among some of the higher officials in the town; but with his sound judgment and patience he certainly manages to keep things going in a most satisfactory manner.

Besides his official business, and with the aid of his nephew, he superintends the manufacture, as we have already seen, of the best, the most characteristically Persian carpets of the finest quality and dyes. There are a great many looms in the buildings adjacent to the Palace and hundreds of hands employed in the Governor's factories. He also possesses a good collection of very

ancient carpets, from which the modern ones are copied.

I returned his visit at his Palace, where the Consul and I were received most cordially and had a lengthy and most interesting conversation with his Excellency. Then he showed me all the buildings in the Ark.

Kerman is celebrated for its cloth manufacture and felts. The cloth is of fine worsted, and is generally in pieces six yards long by three quarters of a yard wide. It is much used by the natives, both for hangings and for making clothes for men and women, being very soft and durable. Embroidered turbans and kamarbands are made from these cloths, especially in white cloth, generally of a fine quality. The process of weaving these cloths, called inappropriately "Kerman shawls," is identical with that of the loom described at the village of Bambis in Chapter XXXVI. The material used for the best quality is the selected fine wool, growing next to the skin of goats. These dyed threads are cut into short lengths and woven into the fabric by the supple and agile fingers of the children working, packed tight together, at the looms. Some of the best cloths, not more than ten feet in length, take as long as a month per foot in their manufacture, and they realise very high prices, even as much as nine or ten pounds sterling a yard. The design on the more elaborate ones is, as in the carpets, learnt by heart, the stitches being committed to memory like the words of a poem. This is not,

however, the case with the simpler and cheaper ones, which are more carelessly done, a boy reading out the design from a pattern or a book.

The carpet factories of Kerman are very extensive, the process being similar to that already described in a previous chapter.



TILED WALLS AND PICTURESQUE WINDOWS IN THE MADRASSAH, KERMAN



SIRKAR AGHA'S SON, THE HEAD OF THE SHEIKHI SECT, KERMAN.

CHAPTER XLIII

The Madrassah—"Peace on Abraham"—The *Hammam*—Trade caravanserais—The Hindoo caravanserai—Parsecs—Ancient fortifications—The Kala-i-Dukhtar, or virgin fort—Speculation—The Kala-Ardeshir—A deep well—Why it was made.

A VISIT to the Madrassah on the north side of the bazaar was extremely interesting, it being the best preserved building of that type I had so far seen in Persia. The Consul and I were shown round it by the Son of Sirkar Agha, the head of the Sheikhi sect, a most dignified individual with long black cloak and ample white turban, and with a beard dyed as black as ink. He conversed most intelligently and took great delight in showing every nook of the building.

The college is only some ninety years old. Its courts, its walls, its rooms, its dome, are most beautifully tiled all over, and, strange to say, it is kept in good repair and the gardens are well looked after. There is a handsome lecture-hall, with four strong receptacles high up in the corners of the room, and fret-work at the windows, not unlike Egyptian *musharabeahs*. Four very high ventilating shafts are constructed over the buildings to keep the rooms cool.

“Peace on Abraham” reads an elaborate inscription, quoted from the Koran, but applying in this case, Sirkar Agha’s son tells me, to the founder of the institution. There are other inscriptions on the towers and ventilating shafts.

At the time of my visit the number of pupils was two hundred. The adjoining Hammam belonging to the College was, to our astonishment, also shown us. Such baths are underground and are reached by steps or by a slippery incline. These particular ones were very superior and had a beautifully tiled entrance, but the door itself was small and always kept closed. The first room was domed with a fountain playing in the centre and platforms, three feet high all round, on the matting of which lay spread a great many cotton towels, red and blue. The only light came from a centre aperture in the dome. High earthen jugs stood artistically resting against one another, and a few people were dressing or undressing preparatory to taking or after having taken a bath. This was all that was done in this room.

Through a narrow slippery passage we entered another room, where the steamy heat was considerable. There were small sections round the room divided by a wall, like the cells of a monastery, and in each cell was a tap of cold water. Then we ascended through a small aperture into another and warmer room, spacious enough, but stifling with a sickening acid odour of perspiration and fumes of over-heated human skins. The steam heat was so great that one

saw everything in a haze, and one felt one's own pores expand and one's clothes get quite wet with the absorbed damp in the atmosphere over-saturated with moisture.

There were two or three men, stripped and only with a loin cloth, lying down flat on their backs,—one undergoing massage, being thumped all over ; another having the hair of his head and beard dyed jet-black. The reason that the Persian hair-dyes are so permanent is principally because the dyeing is done at such a high temperature and in such moist atmosphere which allows the dye to get well into the hair. When the same dyes are used at a normal temperature the results are never so successful. Further, a third man was being cleansed by violent rubbing. He needed it badly ; at least, judging by the amount of black stuff that rolled from his skin under the operator's fingers. The attendants, too, barring a loin-cloth, were naked.

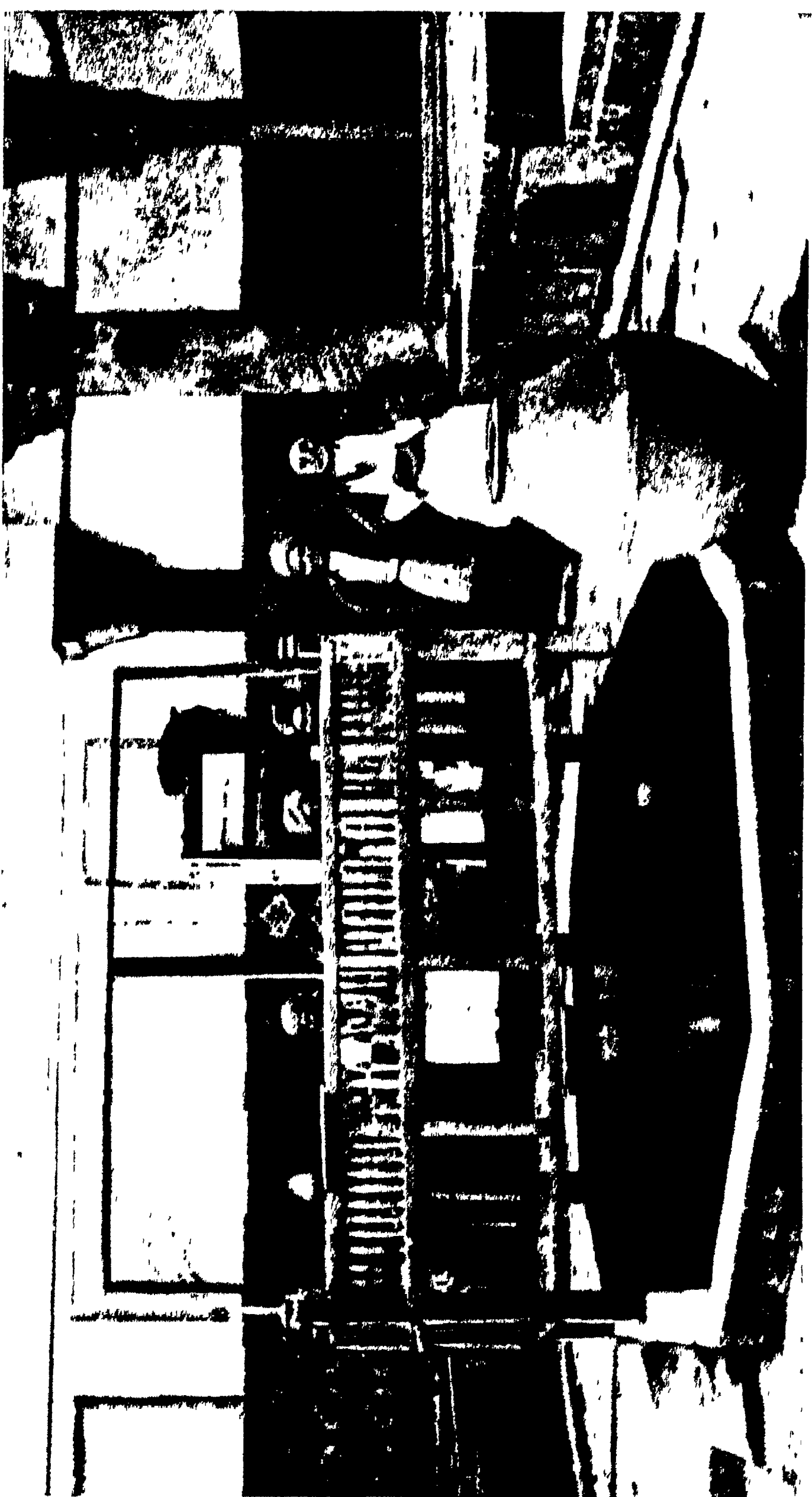
With perspiration streaming down my cheeks I took the photographs here reproduced, and then proceeded to a yet hotter small room—as suffocating a place as one may wish to enter in one's lifetime, or after ! One received a positive scorching blow in the face as one entered it, the heat was so great. This is the last chamber, and in a corner is a tap of cold water with which the skin is repeatedly rinsed and made to sweat several times until the pores are considered absolutely clean. There were two people lying down in a semi-unconscious state, and although I was only there a few minutes I came out quite limp

and rag-like. It ruined my watch, and only by very careful nursing I was able to save my camera from falling to pieces. On returning to the previous hot chamber it seemed quite cool by comparison, and when we emerged again into the open air, thermometer about 90° in the shade, one felt quite chilled.

The various trade caravanserais, of which there were over a dozen in Kerman on either side of the main bazaar street, were quite interesting. They were large courts with high platforms, six to ten feet high, all round them, the centre well, enclosed by them, being tightly packed with camels, mules and donkeys. Above on the broad platform lay all the packs of merchandise which had arrived from Birjand and Afghanistan, from Beluchistan or from India *via* Bandar Abbas. The shops and store rooms were neat and had wood-work in front, with gigantic padlocks of a primitive make. Some, however, had neat little English padlocks.

The most interesting to us, but not the most beautiful, was the Hindoo caravanserai, where some forty British Hindoo merchants carried on their commerce. The place looked old and untidy, and the shops overcrowded with cheap articles of foreign make, such as are commonly to be seen in India,—paraffin lamps, knives, enamelled ware, cotton goods, indigo, tea, sugar and calicos being prominent in the shops. The piece goods come mostly from Germany and Austria, the cottons from Manchester.

The Hindoos were very civil and entertained



THE INTERIOR OF A HAMMAM OR BATH—FIRST ROOM.

us to tea, water melon, and a huge tray of sweets, while a crowd outside gazed at the unusual sight of Europeans visiting the caravanserais. The merchants said that the trade in cotton, wool, gum and dates was fairly good, and that, taking things all round, matters went well, but they had a great many complaints—they would not be Hindoos if they had not—of petty quarrels to be settled among themselves and with the Persians. These, of course, arose mostly out of matters of money. They seemed otherwise quite jolly and happy, notwithstanding the exaggerated hats and curious costumes they are compelled to wear, so that they may be distinguished at a glance from the Persians themselves.

Here, too, as has been already said, there is a small Parsee community of about 3,000 souls. They are, however, rather scattered nowadays, and are not so prominent as in Yezd.

The side streets leading out of the bazaar are narrow and dingy, covered up in places with awnings and matting. There is very little else worth seeing in the city, but the many ruins to the east of the town and the ancient fortifications are well worth a visit.

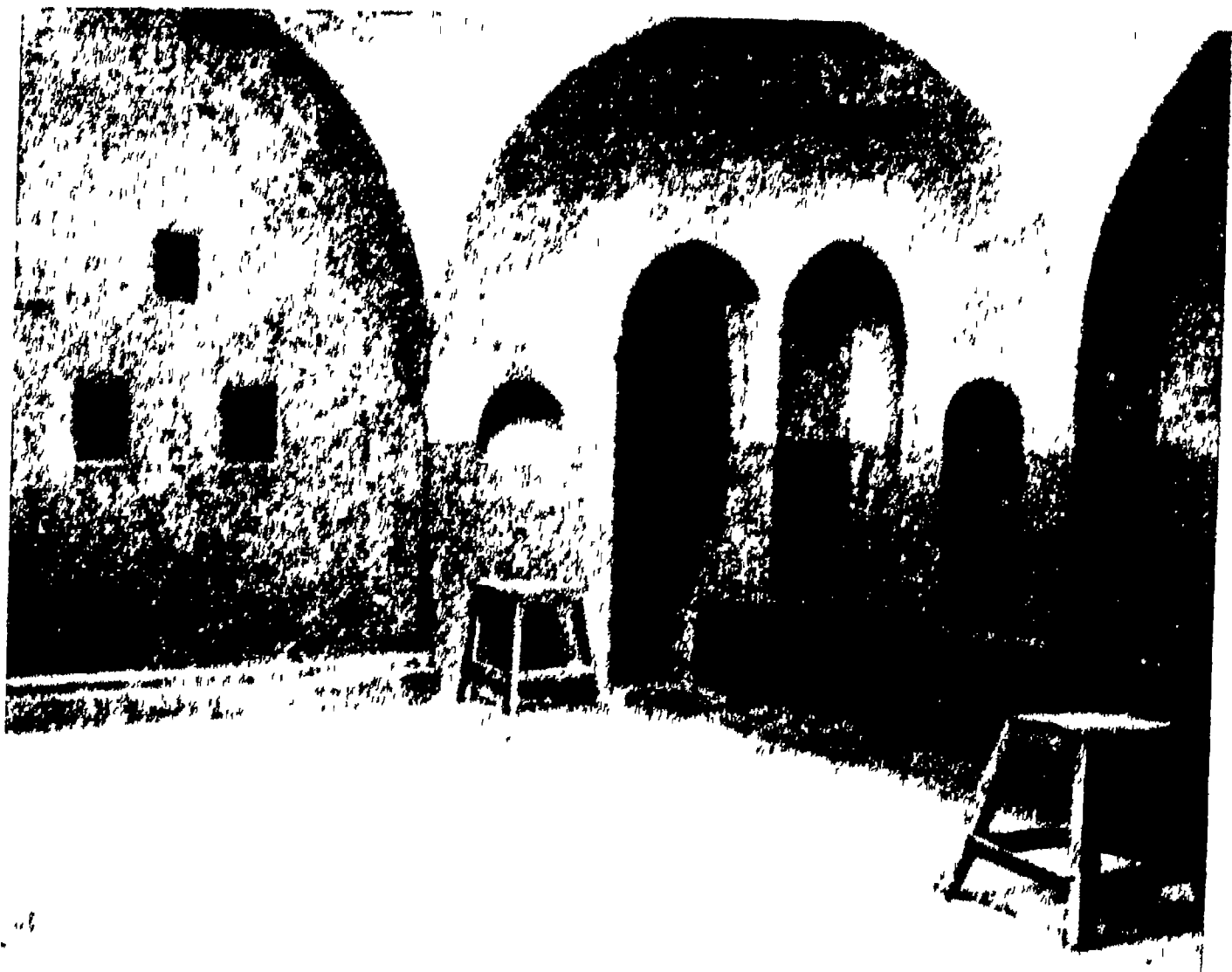
It is to the east of the city that the ancient fortifications are found, on the most western portion of the crescent-shaped barrier of mountains. According to some natives the smaller fort, the Kala-i-Dukhtar, or Virgin fort, on the terminal point of the range, at one time formed part of ancient Kerman. The fort, the Kala-i-Dukhtar is on the ridge of the hill, with a fairly

well-preserved castellated wall and a large doorway in the perpendicular rock at the end of the hill range.

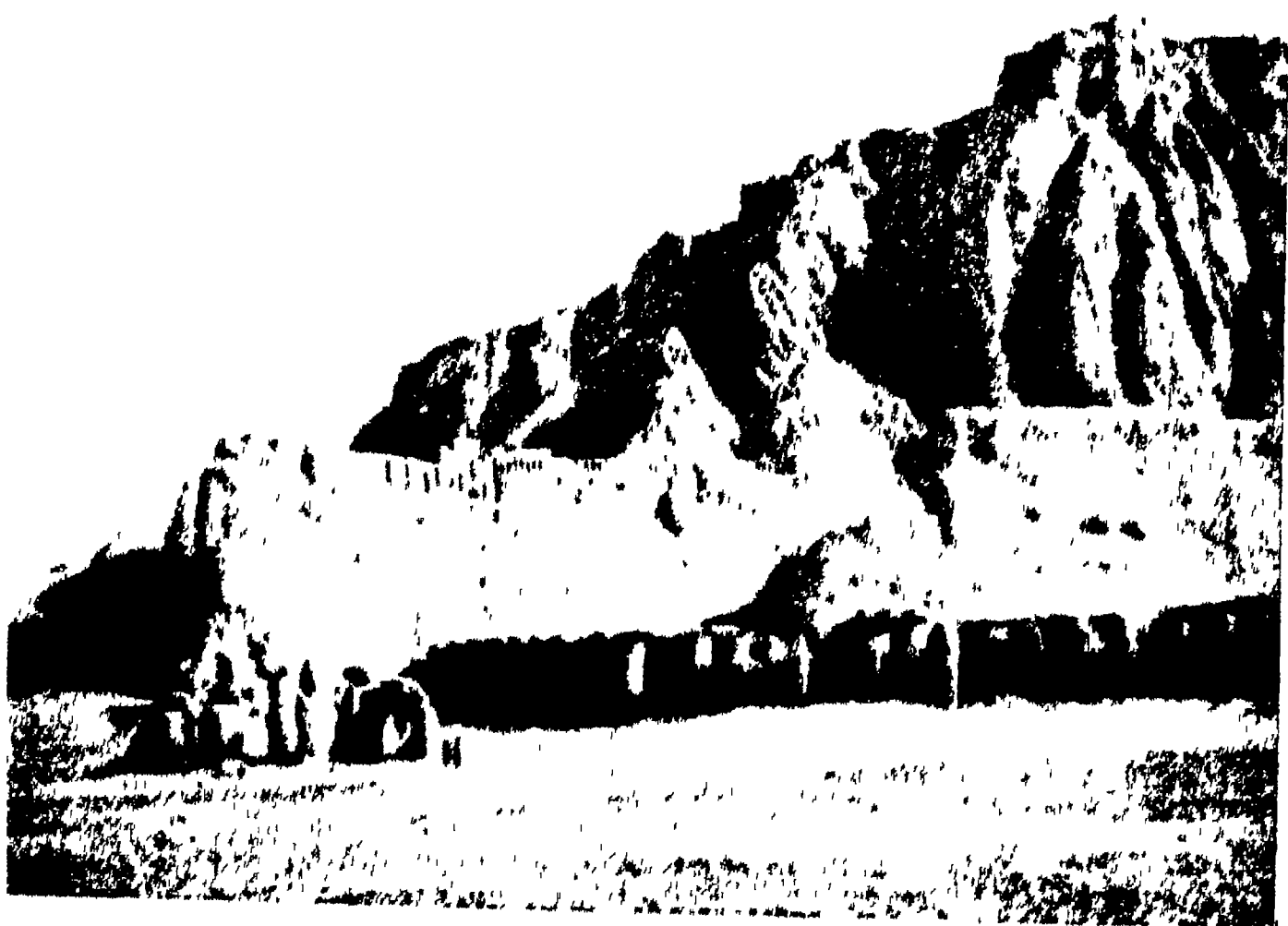
In a long semicircular wall at the foot of the hill a row of niches can be seen, but whether these made part of an ancient stable for horses, or were used for other purposes, I could not quite ascertain. Some people said that they were a portion of a *hammam*; others said they might have been cells of a prison, but what remained of them was not sufficient to allow one to come to a satisfactory conclusion.

The outside wall of the fort was very high, and had strong battlements and towers. Inside the lower wall at the foot of the hill was a moat from twenty-five to thirty feet wide and fifteen feet deep. The upper wall went along the summit of two ridges and was parallel to the lower one, which had four large circular turrets, and extended down to and over the flat for some 120 yards. There was another extensive but much demolished fortress to the east of this on the lower part of the hill range, guarding the other side of the entrance of the pass, and this, too, had two large walled enclosures in the plain at its foot. A great many fragments of pottery with angular geometrical patterns and small circles upon them were to be found here and in the neighbourhood.

The fort of Kala-i-Dukhtar is attributed by the people to King Ardishir, and is one of the three mentioned by Mukaddasi in the tenth century, who, in describing the city of Bardasir,



THE HOT ROOM IN A PERSIAN BATH.



THE KATALI DOODHBAD AND VIRGIN ROAD.

unmistakably identified with the present Kerman, speaks of the three famous impregnable castles—the *Hisn* defended by a ditch, evidently the one above described, directly outside the city gate, and the old castle, the Kala-i-Kuh, on the crest of the hill. It has been assumed that the third castle mentioned by Mukaddasi, 'was where the *Ark* or citadel is now, but personally I doubt whether this is correct. The citadel, the residence of the present Governor, is to my mind of much more recent origin. There is every sign to make one doubt whether Kerman extended in those days as far west as the citadel, which to-day occupies the most western point outside the city; whereas in the accounts of Mukaddasi one would be led to understand that the third fortress was well within the city near a great mosque. In Persian chronicles, too, the Hill Castle, the old, and the new castles are often referred to, but personally I believe that these three castles were adjoining one another on the same chain of hills.

An ascent to the Kala Ardeshir well repays the trouble of getting there. It is not possible to reach the Castle from the south side, where the rocky hills are very precipitous, and even from the north it is not easy of access. On the north-west side, facing the British Consulate, there is a somewhat narrow and slippery track in the rock along a ravine, by which—in many places “on all fours”—one can get up to the top.

The gateway is very much blocked with sand, but squeezing through a small aperture one can

get inside the wall, within which are several small courts, and a series of tumbled-down small buildings. In the walls can still be seen some of the receptacles in which grain and food were formerly stored.

Although the exterior of the castle, resting on the solid rock and built of sun-dried bricks so welded together by age as to form a solid mass, appears in fair preservation from a distance, when one examines the interior it is found to be in a dreadful state of decay. The courts and spaces between the walls are now filled up with sand. There is a well of immense depth, bored in the rock, the fort standing some five hundred feet above the plain ; but although this is said by some writers to have been a way of escape from this fortress to as distant a place as Khabis, some forty-five miles as the crow flies to the east of Kerman, I never heard this theory expounded in Kerman itself, but in any case, it is rather strange that the well should have been made so small in diameter as hardly to allow the passage of a man, its shaft being bored absolutely perpendicular for hundreds and hundreds of feet and its sides perfectly smooth, so that an attempt to go down it would be not a way of escape from death, but positive suicide. The well was undoubtedly made to supply the fort with water whenever it became impracticable to use the larger wells and tanks constructed at the foot of the hills within the fortification walls.



GRAVEYARD AND KALA-I-DUKHTAR OR VIRGIN FORT, KERMAN.

CHAPTER XLIV

The deserted city of Farmidan—More speculation—The Afghan invasion—Kerman surrenders to Agha Muhammed Khan—A cruel oppressor—Luft-Ali-Khan to the rescue—The Zoroastrians—Mahala Giabr—Second Afghan invasion—Luft-Ali-Khan's escape—Seventy thousand human eyes—Women in slavery—Passes—An outpost—Fire temples—Gigantic inscriptions—A stiff rock climb—A pilgrimage for sterile women—A Russian picnic—A Persian dinner—Fatabad—The trials of abundance—A Persian menu—Rustamabad—Lovely fruit garden.

THE very large deserted city of Farmidan lies directly south of the mountainous crescent on which are found the fortifications described in the previous chapter. The houses of the city do not appear very ancient, their walls being in excellent preservation, but not so the domed roofs which have nearly all fallen in. The houses are entirely constructed of sun-dried mud bricks, now quite soldered together by age and reduced into a compact mass. A few of the more important dwellings have two storeys, and all the buildings evidently had formerly domed roofs. In order that the conformation of each house may be better understood, a plan of one typical building is given. On a larger or smaller scale they all

resembled one another very closely, and were not unlike the Persian houses of to-day.

There was a broad main road at the foot of the mountains along the southern side of which the city had been built, with narrow and tortuous streets leading out of the principal thoroughfare. Curiously enough, however, this city appeared not to have had a wall round it like most other cities one sees in Persia. It is possible that the inhabitants relied on taking refuge in the strength and safety of the forts above, but more probable seems the theory that Fārmidan was a mere settlement, a place of refuge of the Zoroastrians who had survived the terrible slaughter by Agha Muhammed Khan.

It may be remembered that when the Afghan determined to regain his throne or die, he came over the Persian frontier from Kandahar. He crossed the Salt Desert from Sistan, losing thousands of men, horses and camels on the way, and with a large army still under his command, eventually occupied Kerman.

Kerman was in those days a most flourishing commercial centre, with bazaars renowned for their beauty and wealth, and its forts were well manned and considered impregnable. So unexpected, however, was the appearance of such a large army that the inhabitants made no resistance and readily bowed to the sovereignty of Agha Muhammed. They were brutally treated by the oppressors. Luft-Ali-Khan hastened from the coast to the relief of the city, and fiercely attacked and defeated the Afghan invader, who

was compelled to retreat to Kandahar; but Kerman city, which had undergone terrible oppression from the entry of the Afghans, fared no better at the hands of the Persians. The Zoroastrians of Kerman particularly were massacred wholesale or compelled to adopt the Mahommedan religion.

It is not unlikely—although I assume no responsibility for the statement—that at that time the Zoroastrians, who were still numerous in Kerman, driven from their homes by the invading Afghan and Persian armies, settled a few miles from the city, unable to proceed further afield owing to the desolate nature of the country all round. With no animals, no means of subsistence, it would have been impossible for them with their families to go much further *en masse* in a country where food and even water are not easily obtainable. The name of the town—Farmidan—also would point to the conclusion that it had been inhabited by Fars, and the age attributed to the city by the natives corresponds roughly with the epoch of the Afghan invasion.

To the north of Kerman city we have another similar settlement, now deserted, Mahala-Giabr (a corruption of Guebre), of which there is little doubt that it was inhabited by Zoroastrians. One of the reasons that these cities are now deserted may be found in the fact that Agha Muhammed, having raised another army in Afghanistan, proceeded a second time to the conquest of Persia. The Zoroastrians, who had fared worse at the

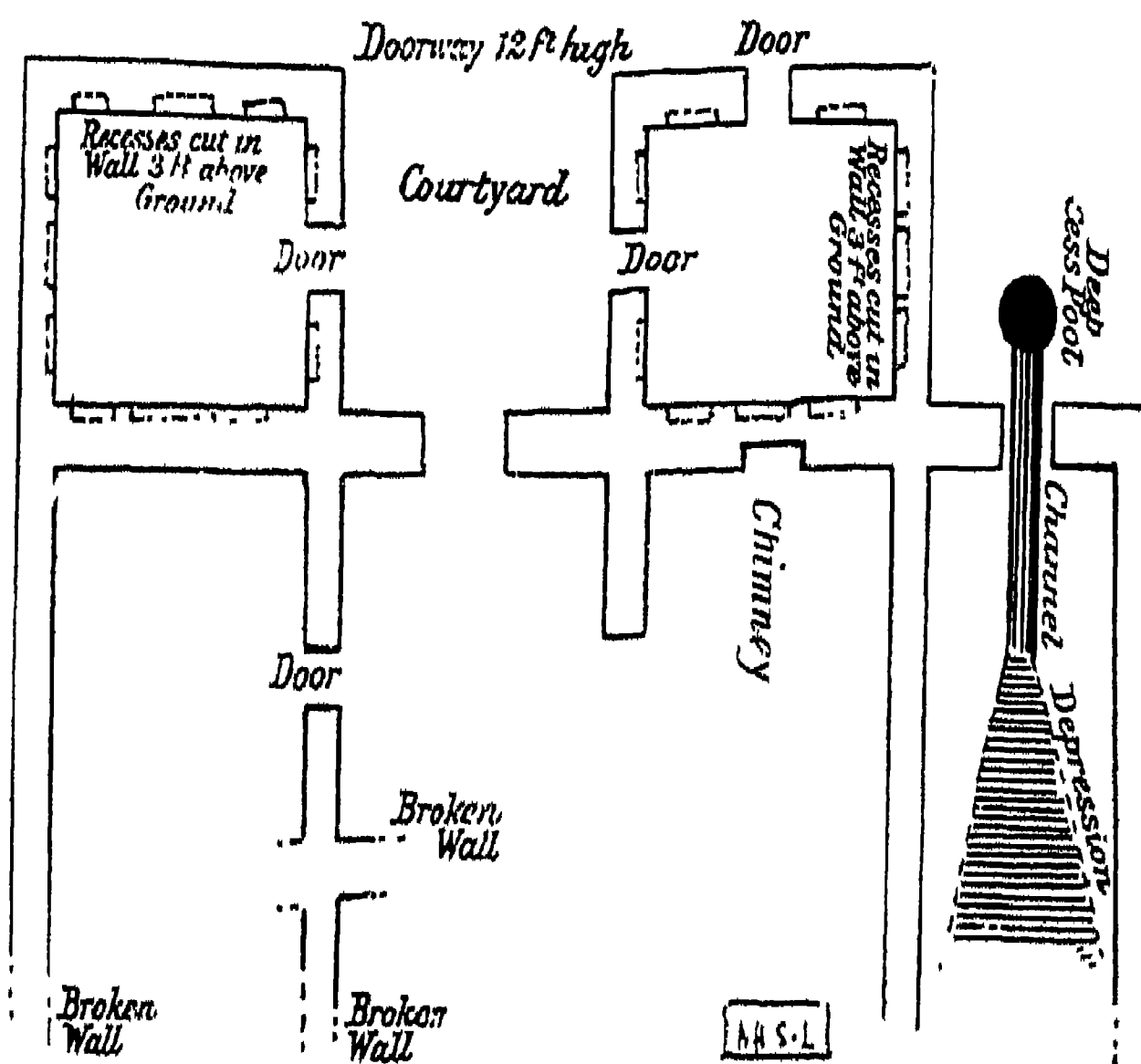
hands of Luft-Ali-Khan than under the Afghan rule, were persuaded to join Agha Muhammed against their Perso-Arab oppressors, in hopes of obtaining some relief to their misery, but history does not relate what became of them. They were never heard of again. One fact only is known, that very few of those living in Kerman at the time succeeded in escaping massacre. That previous to this the Zoroastrians must have been very numerous in Kerman can be judged by the remains of many fire-temples to be seen, especially in the neighbourhood of the city.

In his second invasion of Persia Agha Muhammed again reached Kerman in 1795 and besieged the city defended by Luft-Ali-Khan. The inhabitants, who had suffered at the hands of their saviours as much if not more than at those of their oppressors, made a half-hearted resistance and eventually, in the thick of the fighting, the city gates were opened by treachery. Luft-Ali-Khan and a handful of his faithful men fought like lions in the streets of the city, but at last, seeing that all hope of victory had vanished, and forsaken by most of his men, Luft-Ali-Khan rode full gallop in the midst of the Afghans. According to chronicles, he defiantly ran the gauntlet with only three followers, and they were able to force their way through the Kajar post and escape to Bam-Narmanshir, the most eastern part of the Kerman province, on the borders of Sistan.

Agha Muhammed demanded the surrender of Luft-Ali-Khan; the city was searched to find



RUINED HOUSES OF FARMPTON.



him, and when it was learned that he had succeeded in effecting an escape, the wrath of the Afghan knew no bounds. The people having declared that they could not find Luft-Ali, he ordered 70,000 eyes of the inhabitants to be brought to him on trays, and is said to have counted them himself with the point of a dagger. But this punishment he believed to be still too lenient. A general massacre of the men was commanded, and no less than 20,000 women and children were made into slaves. To this day the proverbially easy morals of the Kerman women are attributed to the Afghan invasion, when the women became the concubines of soldiers and lost all respect for themselves ; and so is the importation of the dreadful disease which in its most virulent form is pitifully common in a great portion of the population of the present Kerman city. According to some the city was razed to the ground, but whether this was so or not, there is no doubt that Kerman has never recovered from the blow received, and from the subsequent oppression at the hands of this barbarous conqueror.

In the south-west part of the mountainous crescent are three very low passes, by which the hill range can be crossed. One pass between the Kala-i-Dukhtar and the Kala-Ardeshir forts ; one between the Kala-Ardeshir and the ruins south of it along the southern continuation of the range ; and the third at the most southern point of the crescent, where the precipitous rocky hill-ranges are separated by a narrow gap, level with

the flat plains on either side. One can still see the remains of a ruined wall on the east side of this entrance, a round, outpost mud turret, with other buildings and a large walled enclosure directly outside the pass on the flat to the south ; while on the lower slope of the eastern mountain stands a tall square building, now roofless, erected on a strong quadrangular base with corner turrets. It has three pointed arch doorways (east, west, south), almost as tall as the building itself, and by the side of these are found high and broad windows in couples. This building appears to be of a much more recent date than the underlying castle filled up with earth on which it stands. It has rather the appearance of a fire temple.

On going through the pass we find ourselves in the centre basin formed by the mountainous crescent, and here we have another deserted settlement smaller than Farmidan, also to all appearance not more than a century old, and directly under the lee of the precipitous rocky mountains. A high building of a rich burnt-sienna colour, with a dome of stone and mortar—the latter said to have been mixed with camel's milk, which gives the mortar greater consistency—is to be seen here. This, too, is supposed to have been a fire temple. Its base is quadrangular, with two tiers of three windows each. A small lateral wall is next to the entrance, but nothing is to be seen in the interior except the bare walls.

East of this, on the face of the cliff and several hundred feet above the valley, one is shown a

gigantic inscription, "Ya Ali," in white characters depicted on the rock. The letters are so big that they can be seen from Kerman, about three miles off. This is a pilgrimage well worth making, for they say every wish of those who climb up to the inscription will come true. Two qualities are required—a very steady head and the agility of a monkey. The angle of the rock is very steep,—almost vertical, as can be seen on the left side of the photograph, which I took from the site of the inscription looking down upon the ruined city and the whole Kerman plain. The only way by which,—on all fours,—one can climb up is so worn, greasy and slippery, owing to the many pilgrims who have glided up and down, that it is most difficult to get a grip on the rock.

Yet the going-up is much easier than the coming down. The full-page illustration shows the man who accompanied me just about to reach the inscription,—I took the photograph as I clung to the rock just below him, as can be seen from the distortion of his lower limbs caused by my being unable to select a suitable position from which to take the photograph. We were then clinging to the rock with a drop below us in a straight line of several hundred feet.

We reached the inscription safely enough, and sat on the edge of the precipice—the only place where we could sit—with our legs dangling over it. Screened as we were in deep shadow, we obtained a magnificent bird's-

eye view of the Kerman plain, brilliantly lighted by the morning sun, and of the forts to our left (south-west) and the many ruins down below between ourselves and Kerman city. A bed of a stream, now dry, wound its way from these mountains to almost the centre of the plain, where it lost itself in the sand beyond a cluster of ruined buildings. Undoubtedly at some previous time this torrent carried a good volume of water to the village, and this accounts for the deserted settlement being found there.

The letters of the inscription were ten feet high, painted white.

The man who had climbed up with me related an amusing incident of the occasion when H. E. the Governor of the city was persuaded to climb to inspect the inscription. Hauled up with the assistance of ropes and servants, he became so nervous when he reached the inscription and looked down upon the precipice below that he offered a huge reward if they took him down again alive. Although otherwise a brave man he was unaccustomed to mountaineering, and owing to the great height, had been seized with vertigo and was absolutely helpless and unable to move. With considerable difficulty he was hauled down and safely conveyed to his palace.

The descent presented more difficulty than the ascent, and one's shoes had to be removed to effect it in more safety. Eventually we reached the bottom again where, in a gully is a small ruined temple and a mud hut or two.



A STEEP ROCK CLIMB, KERMAN.

Photograph of Guide taken by the Author on reaching the Inscription several hundred

A great many women, who from this point had been watching us come down along the face of the cliff, stampeded away, giggling, at our approach, and on my asking why so many representatives of the fair sex were to be found here—there were lots more dotting the landscape below in their white or black chudders, all converging towards this point—it was explained that, a few yards off, was a rock possessing marvellous properties. The rock in question forms part of the mountain-side, and in its natural formation coarsely suggests, much magnified, the effigy of a component of feminine anatomy. At the foot of it there was an inscription and certain offerings, while above it, in a recess, a large wax candle was burning. Near this stone a stunted tree was to be seen, laden with bits of red and white rags and various kinds of hair—a most unedifying sight.

This is a well-known pilgrimage for sterile women, who, after certain exorcisms in front of and on the divine stone, and a night or two spent in the neighbouring ruins, are said infallibly to become prolific. The neighbouring ruins, it should be added, are the favourite night resort of the Kerman young men in search of romantic adventure, and a most convenient rendezvous for flirtations; but whether the extraordinary qualities of prolificness are really due to the occult power of the magic stone or to the less mystic charms of nights spent away from home, the reader is no doubt better able to discriminate than I. Judging by the long strings of ladies of all ages to be

seen going on the pilgrimage, one would almost come to the conclusion that half the women of Kerman are in a bad plight, or else that the other half only is a good lot!

Much unsuspected amusement was provided to the natives by a Russian political agent who had visited Kerman a few weeks before I did, with the intention—it was stated—of starting a Consulate there and a caravanserai to further Russian trade. Previous to his departure, attracted merely by the lovely view from the pilgrimage stone, and absolutely unaware of what misconstruction might be placed on his hospitality, the Russian gave a picnic at this spot to the tiny European community of Kerman. Needless to say, the evil-minded Persians of course put a wrong construction upon the whole thing, and a good deal of merriment was caused among the natives—who may lack many other qualities, but not wit—by the sahibs going *en masse* to the pilgrimage.

The Russian picnic was the talk of the bazaar when I was there, and will probably remain so for some little time.

We will now leave ruins and puzzling pilgrimages alone, and will accept an invitation to a substantial Persian dinner with Hussein-Ali-Khan, known by the title of Nusrat-al-Mamalik, and probably the richest man in the province of Kerman. At great expense and trouble, this man bought an English carriage, for the pleasure of driving in which he actually made a road several miles long. He kindly sent the carriage

for the Consul and me to drive to his place, and had relays of horses half-way on the road so that we could gallop the whole way. He has planted trees all along the new road, and brought water down from the hills by a canal along the roadside in order to provide sufficient moisture to make them grow.

When we reached Fatabad—that was the name of the village close to which our host's country residence stood—we alighted at a most beautiful avenue of high trees on either side of a long tank of limpid water, in which gracefully floated dozens of swans and ducks. We were met at the gate by our host, a charming old fellow, and his son, Mahommed Ali Khan, a most intelligent young man. Surrounded by a crowd of servants we were shown round the beautiful garden, with its rare plants from all parts of the world, its well-cared-for flowers, and its fruit trees of every imaginable kind. There was a handsome house built in semi-European style and with European furniture in it. On a table in the dining-room were spread a great many trays of sweets. After the usual compliments dinner was brought in by a long row of attendants, who carried tray after tray full of delicacies, part of which they deposited on the table, the rest on the floor.

Our host, with much modesty, asked us to sit at the table, and he and his Persian friends sat themselves on the floor. We—the Consul, the two other Englishmen, residents of Kerman, and myself, however—declined to take advantage of

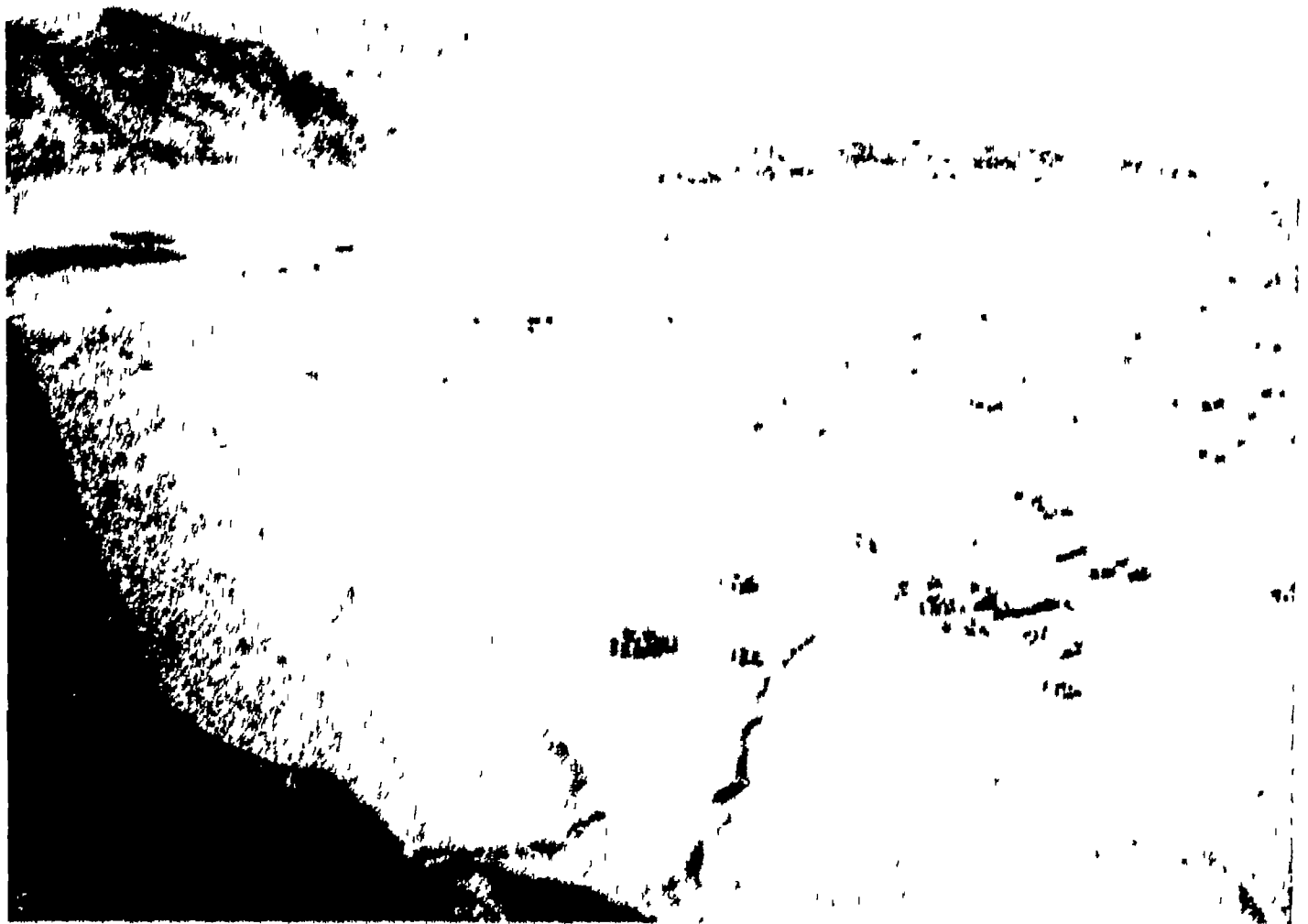
his offer and declared that we should all sit on the floor in the best Persian style, an attention which was greatly appreciated by our host and by his friends.

It was with some dismay that I saw more trays of food being conveyed into the room, until the whole floor was absolutely covered with trays, large and small, and dishes, cups and saucers, all brim-full or something or other to eat.

Persian food of the better kind and in moderation is not at all bad nor unattractive. It is quite clean,—cleaner, if it comes to that, than the general run of the best European cooking. The meat is ever fresh and good, the chickens never too high—in fact, only killed and bled a few minutes before they are cooked; the eggs always newly laid in fact, and not merely in theory, and the vegetables ever so clean and tasty. As for the fruit of Central and Southern Persia, it is eminently excellent and plentiful.

The Persians themselves eat with their fingers, which they duly wash before beginning their meals, but we were given silver forks and spoons and best English knives. Really to enjoy a Persian meal, however, one's fingers are quite unapproachable by any more civilised device.

The most sensible part of a Persian meal is its comparative lack of method and order, anybody picking wherever he likes from the many dishes displayed in the centre of the room and all round him; but any one endowed with digestive organs of moderate capacity feels some apprehension at



A VIEW OF THE KERMAN PLAIN FROM THE "YA ALI" INSCRIPTION.
 (How steep the ascent to the inscription is can be seen by the mountain side on
 left of observer.)



the mountains of rice and food which are placed before one, and is expected to devour. A European who wants to be on his best behaviour finds the last stages of a Persian dinner a positive trial, and is reminded very forcibly of the terrible fable of the frog that tried to emulate the cow. To show the reader to what test of expansion one's capacity is put, no better evidence can be given than a faithful enumeration of the viands spread before us at the dinner here described, all of which we were made to taste.

Qalam palājō	= Cabbage pilao.
Chilā-ō	= White rice with a soupçon of butter.
Khurish-i-murgh-i-bādinjān	= Stew of chicken with tomatoes.
Kabāb-i-chūja	= Broiled chicken.
Shāmī	= Meat sausages.
Dulmayi qalam	= Meat wrapped in cabbage leaves with onions and beans.
Āb-gūsht	= Soup with a lump of meat.
Halwa	= A dish of honey, pistache, and camel's milk.
Kū-kū	= Omelette of eggs and vegetables.
Mushta	= Rissoles.
Mast	= Curds.
Kharbuza	= Melon.
Panir	= Cheese.
Turb	= Radishes.
Pista	= Pistachio nuts.
Ānār	= Pomegranates.
Zabān-i-gaw	= Green bombes.
Turshi	= Pickles of all sorts.
Rishta	= White and green vermicelli cakes.
Murabba bihi	= Preserved gum.

To these must be added the numerous sweets of which one has to partake freely before dinner.

Through dinner only water is drunk, or nothing at all, but before and after, tea—three-quarters sugar and one quarter tea, with no milk,—is served, and also delicious coffee.

The capacity of Persians is enormous, and on trying to emulate it we all suffered considerably. So pressing were our hosts to make us eat some of this and some of that, and to taste some of the other, that by the time we had finished we were all in a semi-conscious state. An attendant passed round a brass bowl and poured upon our fingers, from a graceful amphora, tepid water with rose-leaf scent. Then our host very considerately had us led to the upper floor of the building to a deliciously cool room, wherein were soft silk broad divans with velvet pillows. Five minutes later, one in each corner of the room, we were all fast asleep. It is the custom in Persia to have a siesta after one's meals—one needs it badly when one is asked out to dinner. So for a couple of hours we were left to ourselves, while our hosts retired to their rooms. Then more tea was brought, more coffee, more sweets.

We paid an interesting visit to the village of Fatabad, the older portion of which, formerly called Rustamabad, had from a distance the appearance of a strongly fortified place. It had a high broad wall with four circular towers at the corners, and quite an imposing gateway. The interior of the village was curious, the habitations being adjacent to the village wall all round, and each room having a perforated dome over it. There was spacious stabling on one side for

horses, and several irregular courts in the centre of the village. A long wall stretched from this village to the Fatabad gardens and palatial dwelling of Hussein-Ali-Khan, and on one side of this wall were nicely kept wheat fields, while on the other lay a capital fruit garden.

In the new village of Fatabad, directly outside the wall of Rustamabad, there were but few houses, with an interesting underground hammam, with water coming from natural mineral springs brought here from the village of Ikhtiyarabad, some little distance off. Behind this village, to the west, a barrier of high rugged hills closed the horizon before us, and made the view a most delightfully picturesque one.

In the evening, in the same grand carriage, we were again conveyed back to Kerman, as I intended to start at midnight on my journey across the Great Salt Desert.

END OF VOL. I

